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VW BUS T4&5+

There are some changes here at VW Bus this month. Jimmer (Or James Northcott to give him the name that almost nobody ever uses) has decided to step back from his role as Editor of the magazine. Now Jimmer is a busy boy, running a successful electrical and building business, as well as two booming VW festivals, Vanwest and Dubtoberfest, so he won't exactly be putting his feet up! An ever present since day one, well, before day one actually, as he was instrumental in setting the magazine up in the first place. Under his stewardship VW Bus magazine has gone on to become the best-selling Volkswagen magazine in the UK bar none. Something he should be rightly proud of. Everybody here at VW Bus would like to thank him for all his hard work over the eight years since the first issue burst on to the shelves. I would particularly like to thank Jimmer, as it was he who invited me to contribute to that very first issue. He's not disappearing completely though and will still be contributing to the magazine every so often.

I became the assistant editor in 2014, issue 23 to be precise, so with all those issues behind me, hopefully I'll be able to step up without too much kafuffle. I recently read a definition of a magazine editor, it said he or she was 'someone who is excited by the parts of a magazine that nobody else reads', so in that one way at least, I am qualified for the role...

Next up then is our Bus of The Year competition, congratulations to Matt Epps and his stunning Blue T4. The award, voted for by our readers, was presented live on stage at Camper Mart in Telford earlier this month. If you weren't there, you should really try and be there next year. As has become customary, this month's centre page spread has been given over to the winner's bus. Congratulations Matt.

In the magazine this month, we have some seriously cool buses. Stitches + Steels' Fire Truck successfully crosses the boundary between 'patina" and 'fauxtina', in that the front end is genuinely fire damaged, it just wasn't on this bus when it happened. Going up, we have an unusual Swamper called Alice, whilst going down, we have So Low's stunning demo bus. Van Haven shared their Haven 6 TT Kombi with us and Volkspec similarly revealed their 'marine' inspired camper. The final place in our monthly line-up is taken by an unusual Petrol VR6 twin slider T4. All in all, a good month for buses.

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Buses

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Sometimes it's best to let the owners tell the story. Oli Grogan from Stitches + Steel is a point in case. Get to it Oli! Tell us the story.

26 A Van Like Alice
Meet Alice - the T4 Swamper on a mission to boldly take its owner where she's never been before.

34 Van So Low
Demo vans abound, some we feature, most we reject. This bus was built to demonstrate one product and one product alone, So Low coil-over suspension. We've wanted to feature it for a while and now we've finally got our van.

54 Chromodynamics
Chromodynamics describes what happens if you let Van Haven loose on a Chrome Yellow T6 Kombi. Also defined as a fantastically flexible and superbly accomplished cruiser, with bells on!

70 The Joy Of Six
With a 2.8 petrol VR6 under the bonnet of a tasty T4, who could blame the owner for enjoying his bus?

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If you've grown up with boats, but made the switch to being a land lubber it stands to reason that you might bring your inspirations with you.

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66 Busfest
Simon again this time he's heading to Malvern for what some regard as the big one

80 The Lowest Of The Low
What happens when The Slambassador Social Club and Lowdown Transports get together? A Slamfest of course, pretty sure drinks were taken too

Roundup

The latest T4 and T5 news from around the world

Medalist's Caravelle

Shooting To Success

Allan Ritchie won a bronze medal at the 2019 Para Trap Shooting World Championship after his converted Volkswagen Caravelle helped afford him the freedom to train and compete. Allan, 50, from Aberdeen, suffered a spinal injury in 2014, but since taking delivery of his wheelchair-accessible Volkswagen Caravelle in 2016, he's been on a journey to shooting glory. Having discovered he had an eye for shooting, Allan began taking part in competitions, using his Caravelle to travel to tournaments across the UK and Europe. He won bronze at the 2019 Para Trap Shooting World Championship in Australia (presumably not with the Caravelle). "I'm delighted to come back with a medal and it was a great experience to shoot against the best in the world. My Caravelle has given me complete independence to be able to travel to events over the past few years. It would not have been possible in any other vehicle. I absolutely love it."

The Caravelle Executive 2.0-litre TDI model has been a trusty companion for Allan since being converted by Volkswagen Commercial Vehicles recognised converter, Lewis Reed, to fit his specialist requirements. An automatic tailgate and loading ramp are fitted which can be remotely operated, while a six-way transfer seat allows Allan access to the driver seat direct from his wheelchair completely unaided. Hand controls on the steering wheel allow Allan to drive on his own—although the Caravelle still retains regular pedals should anyone else wish to drive.

VW Awards

Transporter Accolades

Far be it from us to promote another magazine, but 'What Van?' are hardly a competitor. So, the 'What Van?' awards are judged by a panel of light commercial vehicle editors from their magazine, as well as residual value specialists, industry consultants and journalists. Strangely our invitation to join the panel seems to have been lost in the post... Even without our guidance, they awarded the T6.1 with its Medium Van of the Year award. James Dallas, editor (theirs not ours), said: "The Transporter is a legendary van and with the T6.1 Volkswagen has improved an already outstanding product. This latest iteration boasts outstanding design features, the latest in engine technology and safety kit, low cost of ownership, the support of an excellent dealer network and, of course, an undeniably strong heritage."

Order books for the latest version of the Transporter van opened in October, with first deliveries starting in January. The T6.1 brings the Transporter, whose story began a full 70 years ago, right up to date for the new decade with a number of safety, tech and comfort enhancements. Proving its longevity, the Transporter also retained its title as Used Van of the Year. Dallas again: "Enduring class, rock-solid build quality and unbeatable residual values make the Volkswagen Transporter a worthy winner of the Used Van of the Year Award."

Sales Up

2019 A Good Year

In 2019, for the third consecutive year, the sales of Volkswagen Commercial Vehicles in the UK rose. Just under 48,000 vehicles were registered, with Crafter sales in particular seeing a huge rise to over 9,000 units. It should not be forgotten however, that the Amarok is included in these figures.

Oops!

In issue 92 there was a small error (we missed out a letter) in a web address contained in the feature for Steve Passmore's stunning purple T5. Steve wanted to thank Bodytech in Salisbury, so, if you're interested in contacting them the correct address is www.bodytechservices.co.uk

Every Little Helps

The Rush To Electrification

Volkswagen announced last year a partnership with Tesco and Pod Point to install around 2,400 charging points for electric vehicles. The rollout is well under way—with EV owners at 100 Tesco stores across the United Kingdom now able to top up their battery for free while shopping. A recent survey revealed that on average people spent fifty minutes a week in supermarkets, meaning that over the course of a year EV drivers could get 1,170 miles free while shopping. As a double eco bonus it's entirely carbon-neutral, as all electricity used to charge cars at Tesco comes from renewable sources. Now where is the Electric Transporter?

On that subject Volkswagen will be launching an incredible thirty-four new models this year and that will include twelve SUVs and eight electric or hybrid vehicles. Volkswagen COO, Ralf Brandstätter, commented: "We are at the beginning of a new era. We mean business with e-mobility. The brand will be investing €19 billion in future technologies through 2024, €11 billion alone in the further development of e-mobility. And Volkswagen starts the biggest electric offensive in the automotive industry this year. So, in answer to our question, "Where is the electric Transporter?" Just around the corner apparently.

More Awards

Olpro Recognition

Late last year tent, awning and camping accessory manufacture and retailer Olpro, were announced as runners up for the prestigious eCommerce Business of the Year by the British Chamber of Commerce. At the finals, held in London, Olpro were chosen as having the second-best eCommerce site in the entire UK. The website, www.olproshop.com had already been voted as best eCommerce site in the Midlands by the Chamber earlier in the year, and so was shortlisted for the national award. Olpro, who have picked up many awards from the Chamber of Commerce over the last two years including best Social Media for 2018, highly commended Customer Services 2019, continue to go from strength to strength as a brand, focusing on constant improvement and ensuring people can buy in the way they want to buy.

Daniel Walton, founder of Worcestershire based Olpro, said "The British Chamber of Commerce represent 75,000 businesses in the UK, so to be a finalist alone is an incredible achievement. To come second is an unbelievable honour. The team work very hard. It's not easy for small companies these days, but we're very focused on our brand, on what we do, and I do think being recognised is deserved. For us, as a company, our customers guide us in terms of what they want from us, but awards show us that the industry believes what we're doing is also right."

ShowGuide

15–16 FEBRUARY
DubFreeze
Stafford County Showground
www.dubfreeze.co.uk

08 MARCH
Ultimate Dubs
The International Centre, Telford
www.ultimate-dubs.co.uk

09–13 APRIL
CamperFest
Roodee Racecourse, Chester
www.camperfest.co.uk

10–13 APRIL
Wonderland 2—The Dubbers of OZ
Chillington Hall, Wolverhampton
www.dubscollective.com

17–19 APRIL
Vee Dub Family
5th Birthday Big Camp Out
Unity Farm, Brean
www.veedubfamily.org

19 APRIL
Elsecar At The Races
Doncaster Racecourse
www.elsecarattheraces.com

19 APRIL
GTI Spring Festival
Santa Pod Raceway
www.santapod.co.uk

03 MAY
Stanford Hall VW Show
Stanford Hall, Stanford-on-Avon
www.stanfordhallvw.com

07–10 MAY
Derbyshire Dubs
Wardlow, Buxton
www.derbyshiredubs.co.uk

08–10 MAY
VW Campout
Budle Bay, Northumberland
www.vwcampout.uk

08–10 MAY
Vanwest
Taunton Racecourse, Somerset
www.vanwest.co.uk

17 MAY
Dubs At The Park
Easthampstead Park, Wokingham
www.dubsatthepark.co.uk

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alan.hayward@vwbusmagazine.com
so that updates can be made for the next issue.

BusKit

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Pole Star

New from Olpro

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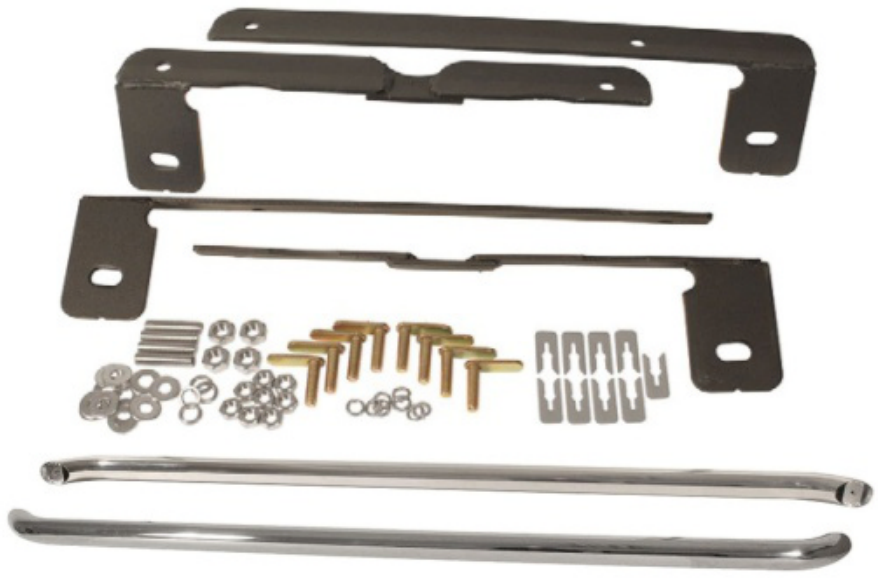
Cost: £399

OLPRO

www.olproshop.com



All Bar None

New From JK

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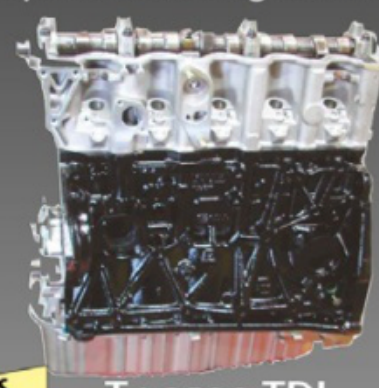

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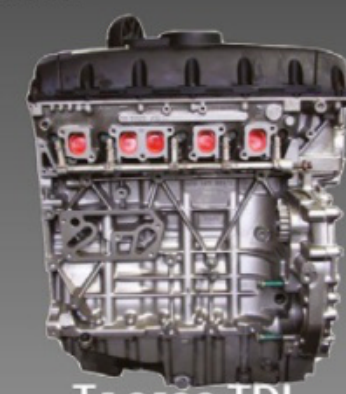

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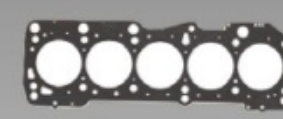

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Sometimes it's best to let the owners tell the story. Oli Grogan from Stitches + Steel is a point in case. Get to it Oli! Tell us the story

Oli Grogan Max Howard

Patina, in progress

It came into our lives via some badly taken photos and a questionably written advert. Admittedly not very romantic. While that made the truck an easier purchase for us, it was the bizarrely elongated XL tray at the back, that was what initially got the juices flowing. The cantilever was undoubtedly the carrot to seal the deal for us. We bid, we waited, then we bid again. The process continued until the virtual hammer fell. There was no way it wasn't going to be ours.

It's common knowledge here at S+S that we like our adventure vans minimal, reliable and purposeful. The opposite could be said for our 'apres work pursuits'. Old and analogue, loud and oily. Thin gauge tin and a whole lot less refined, traits resonating from an era past. Tinkering with the older metal, vintage cars and bikes has always served as a fresh outlet, especially as the daily content here at the studio is so clean, clinical, precise and digital.

As we trundled back South, we sensed a new feeling, there was genuinely no good reason to modify it? A strange feeling.

From the products we make, to conversions we fit, along with the way we trade. Online retail is inherently a very digital beast. If it was the long tray on this Transporter that initially spoke to us, it was closely followed by its physical potential, along with the realisation that we could then use it to one day haul our old (generally German),

Bag control

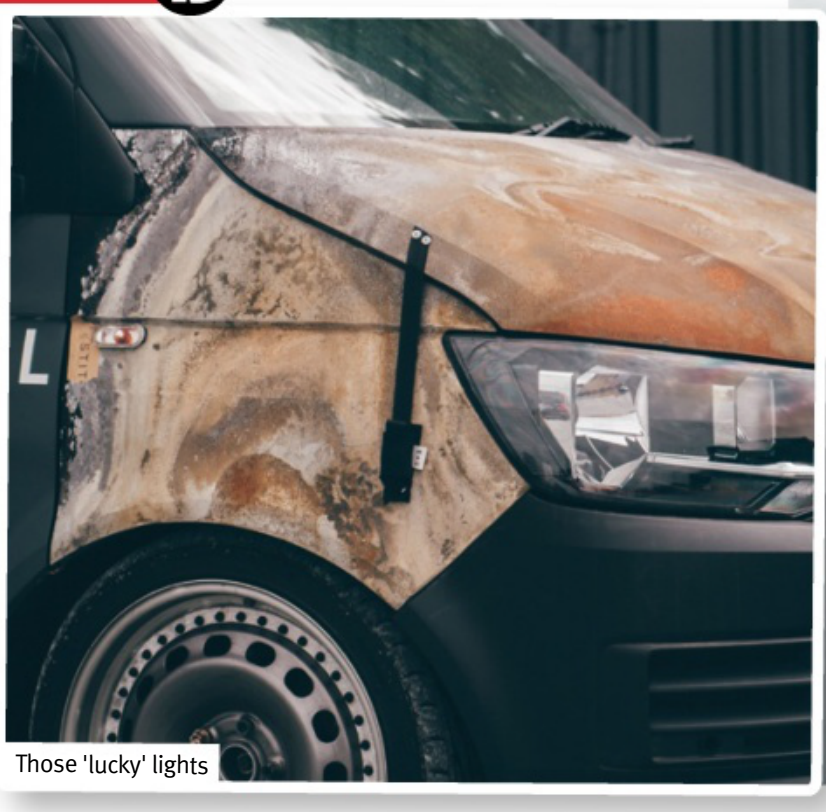
Plus, we needed a shop truck—every shop needs a shop truck, right?

clunkers around with our old bikes too. Plus, we *needed* a shop truck—every shop *needs* a shop truck, right?

This time the cross was drawn on the map somewhere North, very far up North. While we trundled back South with our purchase, we sensed a new feeling, as far as we could tell, there was genuinely no good reason to modify it? A strange feeling. It was the first time we'd spent longer than five minutes in something without having an overwhelming urge to modify it. So, we did just that. Rather than fire up the grinders and head into it, spanners akimbo, we just didn't. Instead, we put some stickers on the doors and walked away... Done. Perhaps we're getting old?

All was going well (growing up), until a picture of a particularly attractive (to me) rusted out, 1950's single cab, split screen van, sign written canvass, beautiful patina, OEM paint, original wheels, purposeful ride height, with a bike on the back, came in to my sight. UH OH! From that moment on, the urge to turn our truck into a modern interpretation of the 50's single cab set in. An urge I couldn't shake.

Being relatively familiar with the air-cooled vehicles from the 50s, I knew only too well the unwavering want, within the inner circles, for the most elusive and rarest parts. I started off on my own little journey of hoarding my interpretation of the modern equivalents for the 'holy grail parts.' A strange one as, I was probably the only one hunting for what I deemed 'holy grail.' The further I went down


Those 'lucky' lights

my path, the more I realised that the parts I wanted, or needed, didn't exist. The goose chase soon turned into a bespoke product list fraught with new challenges. My ideas were simple, effectively copying 1950's design, but to execute them wasn't as easy. The parts and the build in my eyes had to be correct and definitely not 'cliche'. The steel frame to hold the canvass had to follow the curve of the T5 roof line, which meant digital rendering, the wood battens had to be ash- the same as the originals. The canvas itself had to have the leather abrasion patches, stainless rivets and fit like an OEM Volkswagen one. What to leave standard and what to breathe on wasn't easy...

I eventually found a pair of commercial hydraulic Recaro seats from an 80's Scania lorry that walked the fine line of commercial and amazing. The wheels were originally OEM steels which were chopped apart, then re-welded and drilled to accept Motorsport dishes and barrels. Before eventually being built back up as staggered, three-piece, split rims and so achieve adjustable offsets. The suspension had to look purposeful and very importantly be purposeful. It was a truck after all. Gucci Air-ride wasn't an option, Modified coil-overs up front with a custom, commercial very analogue, oversized airbag kit setup out back, allowed it to retain its function of being laden with goods.

The urge to make it rusty still lingered though. I hankered after some sort of patina. The thought of the 50's single cab decaying with rust, made that

Bus details

What did the van start as? LWB Pick-up with an extra-long tray

Colour? Matt black and fire damged

LWB/SWB LWB

BHP? 104

Wheels type and size? Caddy steel centres banded with split rim dishes, barrels and hardware reworked to fit 18”

Tyres? 225/45/18

Lowered? Hub Mod and coil-overs up front, with a bagged rear end

Why is it special to you?

Fashion and function... Can’t argue with that

Commercial Recaros

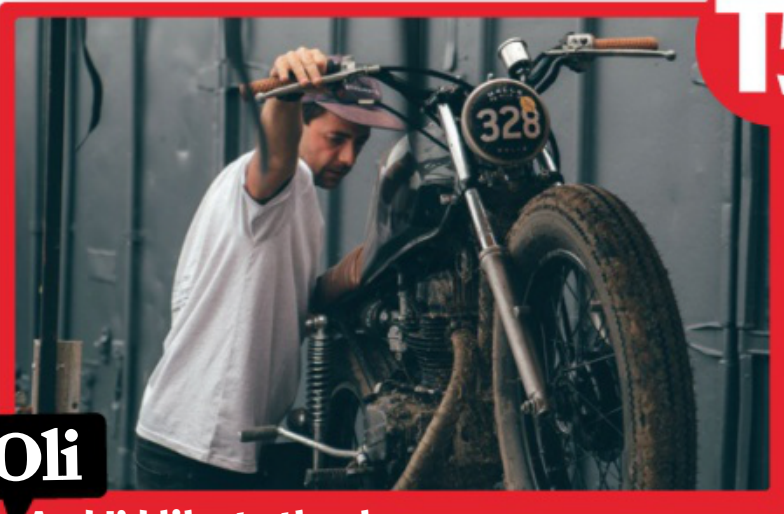
The canvas itself had to have the leather abrasion patches, stainless rivets and fit like an OEM Volkswagen one

particular van for me, ours needed the patina, or something like a modern interpretation of it. Whilst that might be tough, due to the beauty of patina taking many years of decay to achieve, the idea to take back the original paint with a grinder and let nature take its course just didn't sit well. It wouldn't ever be real, and that would bother me...

Finally, after over a year, the last piece of my part hoarding puzzle pinged onto my phone, though an eBay alert set many moons ago. 'Fire damaged T6' the alert read. 'Buy instantly,' my thumb said. The 1000-mile old T6 had suffered from an unknown fatal fire which in my eyes now provided fire damaged paint that would eventually rust. Naturally. With that it would eventually take on its own identity. My 'real' patina urge finally became a reality.

The pickup lives at the studio and continues to do the daily duties it's always done so well and, while the front end gets a few too many questions at the petrol station for my liking, 'Poor thing', 'Unlucky mate', 'real shame it caught on fire'. The more qualified questions are 'weird how the bumper didn't melt', 'the lights survived the blaze, lucky!' We're a bit unsure with how much grinning through closed teeth while nodding we can endure, so time will tell if the fire front stays 'on fire' however, one thing is for sure, it'll be driven daily as it is genuinely is the handiest thing we own. So, while I can't quite award us a gold star for not modifying it, can I at least have a consolidation prize for not *completely* ruining it?

Fashion and function



T5

Oli

And I'd like to thank...

The customers. The one's who buy when we're not having a sale, and the ones who support us and don't ask for discounts of freebies. That is huge and doesn't go unnoticed, so a MASSIVE thank you for that. Along with all who follow us here at S+S, and the crazed journey we're on. And Tor, she puts up with a lot. This truck is literally a visual metaphor of my brain. Imagine having to deal with that... Daily! So yeah, a big thank you to her.

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Party In The Park 2

Party In The Park 2, the sequel. The show that saw more 80s music than you can shake a glow stick at

Simon Cooke

You know you are doing something right with your show when it's a sell-out (over 10,000 visitors packed the venue) and there are people trying to sell fake tickets on the black market. Unfortunately for them, one of those scammers then tried to sell tickets to one of the main organisers—who happens to be an ex-copper! And you know your show is getting big, when it's being compared to Glastonbury—even if the comparison is regarding the traffic jam to get into the venue! Mind you, name me a big event that doesn't have a bit of a traffic jam. However, I can reveal that those frustrating problems, mostly not of the organisers making, have been sorted for the next instalment of Party in the Park, when it will be moved to Chillington Hall, Codsall, a much larger venue, with better access and more spacious grounds.

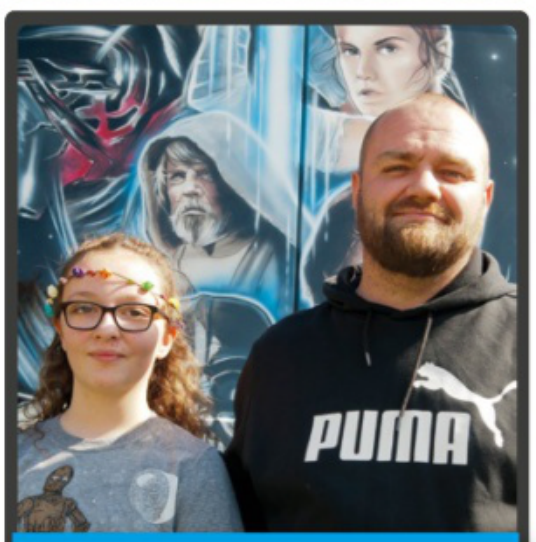
As you might have gathered by the previous sentence, the event we are reviewing here is Party In The Park 2, run by the enthusiastic team from Dubs Collective (we featured them in a club profile in 2019). They also ran Dubs In Wonderland earlier in the year—both shows were based at Himley Hall in the West Midlands. So being run by a club of VW enthusiasts, you can understand why it's a VW-flavoured music festival—think more of (a smaller) Camper Calling, than Camper Jam, assuming you are familiar with either of those events.

Some people got the chance the chance to meet some of the original cast of Quadrophenia, including Phil Daniels, Toyah and Lesley Ash

Let's get you up to speed with the music line-up—after all that's what the whole thing is pretty much all about. The show opened on the Friday and Friday night's entertainment included tribute bands to OMD, Spandau Ballet, Madness, U2, Blondie and The Human League—now that's an 80s line-up and no mistake. By using two stages arranged side-by-side, meant that there was no massive downtime when bands are setting up their kit, so all the audience needed to do was to turn their attention (and feet) by about 20 degrees—depending how close to the stage they are standing / sitting—and then carry on with the next band.

On the Saturday it was original artistes strutting their stuff, rather than tribute acts—starting with Curiosity Killed The Cat, followed by Hazel Dean, XSimple Minds, Altered Images, Owen Paul, The

Original cast members



AT THE SHOW

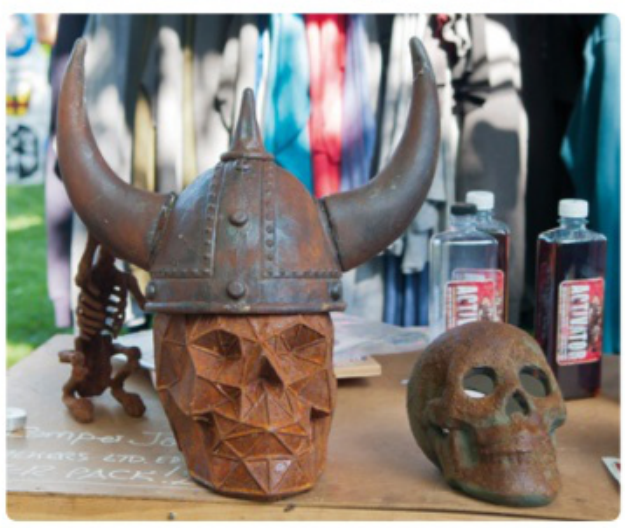
Ben was camping at the event with his family in their Star Wars Crafter; you can't see in the photo, but his body is covered in Star Wars tattoos. He used to own a T4 LWB, but then had his second child so needed something bigger—hence the Crafter. He's not been to the show before and actually says that 90s music is more his thing rather than 80s!

The Nevile Staples Band

Quad cast

Altered Images

In the dance tent



AT THE SHOW

Lea comes from Chester and was camping for the weekend in a T4. She loved the Dubs in Wonderland Show earlier in the year at Himley Hall, and wanted to come back for some more of the same. She's loves all the 80s music and the dressing up which goes with it.

Twin stages

Christians, Neville Staples (ex-Specials), Toyah (who reminded me of Hazel O'Conner) and then Jaki Graham to round off what might well go down as the last sunny day of last year.

Highlights of the day for me were Altered Images, XSimple Minds and Neville Staples and his band, who played many of the Special's biggest hits, but seemed to miss out two of my favourites; Too Much Too Young and Rat Race—unless my memory is playing tricks on me? He also didn't sing Free Nelson Mandela—although I guess it's a bit dated now, but I heard it did the trick at the time and Nelson got out.

If those live acts were not your cup of tea—and it would a mystery to me if they weren't (see what I did there?) then you could always have made your way to the dance tent to get your groove on with 'Slippers The Split'. But you would have needed to take care not to walk into the fire jugglers and eaters on your way! That tent (which had a bar as well as the music) was also the place to be during the daytime for the Breakdancing demos. There was also another tented area—I'm guessing put up to keep people out of the rain—although on the Saturday it was also handy to provide some much-needed shelter from the burning sun!

On the Saturday it was original artistes strutting their stuff, rather than tribute acts

If you could drag yourself away from the live music which kicked of at High Noon—then there was plenty of others things to take your attention and money, including death defying stunts on BMX bikes and motorbikes hosted by British champion Lee Musselwhite and a trade area with seventy-five traders, one of the largest I saw last year; I even bought my nephews some Christmas prezzies there, plus one of those funky metal spin art garden decoration things! There was also a decent sized fun fair.

Sunday was devoted to the classic mod film Quadrophenia—with bands such as The Nutty Boys, Wrong Jovi, Flash Queen and The Jam'd on stage throughout the day and even the chance for some lucky people to meet some of the original cast including Phil Daniels, Toyah and Lesley Ash. Sunday was also the day for the VW Show & Shine—just a shame the weather wasn't as glorious as it was for Saturday.

What of Party In The Park 3 I hear you ask? Yes! It's all happening again, but at that new venue. With three decades of music from the 70s, 80s and 90s, a host of original 90s stars, together with The Dualers, The Real thing, Bad Manners, Dr & The Medics, T'Pau and Technotronic. Track down the show on Facebook or via the website to book tickets—last year was a sell out for overnight camping with 1500 vans taking up the allocated camping plots, Next year is likely to be exactly the same, even with the added VIP camping area.

A Van Like Alice

Meet Alice - the T4 Swamper on a mission to boldly take its owner where she's never been before

Simon Cooke

R982 JKO
SCHLAHN WAGEN
HANNOVER

Hello Alice

Quite often I'll start a feature with an introduction about the owner's driving history and background with cars, before we get onto the VW we are actually featuring—such as their first car was a Beetle, and they got their first camper when they were forty, or when the kids left home etc etc. And this feature is similar, but not quite the same...

Kelly Noble from Gloucester does not have a great history of previous driving experiences. Twelve years ago she was innocently crossing a set of lights in her car, when another car ignored the red lights and T-boned her, writing her car off—physically she wasn't too damaged, but mentally it really knocked her confidence, which is perfectly understandable. Since then she's been in two more serious accidents, both as a passenger. The last one, another write-off was in August 2018. She's even resorted to some CBT therapy to get her driving confidence up again; last year she almost turned down a promotion at work because of the driving it would involve, which would have moved her right out of her comfort zone. She needs to drive at weekends when she is often trading as VW shows with her custom illustrated creations—she used to look at show locations

Bus details

What did the van start as? 1998 T4 panel van

Colour? Brown / orange

LWB/SWB SWB

BHP? 88

Wheels type and size? Standard steelies 15"

Tyres? 225/70/15

Lowered? No, Raised 2"

Why is it special to you? It's my own special wonderland on wheels

If I have to reverse Alice into a space, then I usually take a photo to show people what I've done, because I'm so proud of myself

on Google maps before deciding to book a stand, depending on whether the roads for the trip looked 'dodgy'.

So, what are we doing here, parked up in a deserted and haunted prison with Kelly's T4? Well, Kelly recently slept the night in her van whilst parked in the prison's exercise yard as part of a VW campout—so that's part of the reason! "Last year I decided that I wasn't going to let my fear of driving take over my life and stress me out," Kelly told me. "My husband, Paul, has a T4 and I realised that you feel a lot safer in a bigger vehicle, " she continued. And buying a Hummer was apparently not an option. So, she ended up buying this T4, pretty much on impulse, at Dubs In The Valley in 2018, following a lap driving it around the field. It turned out that the van had originally been built by local conversion company—Surfstyle Vans, so it seemed apt that the T4 would be coming home again. Mind you she wasn't about to jump in it and drive it home. In fact, she got it delivered to her local show—Dubs of Anarchy, and even then, couldn't face driving it, so she got her husband to drive it home from there. The van sat on the drive for several months while she plucked up the courage to drive it further than around the block. "I didn't remember it being quite so big when I was buying it,' she admits with a grimace. "The van had already been painted with this matt camo brown and orange scheme" said Kelly. "Inside it had a wooden floor, some wood on the roof, a bare wooden pod and a bed. Up front the dash had been painted and hessian covered the seats and door cards; but it certainly needed some TLC!" she elaborated. By the way, it is apparently very hard to get decals to stick to that matt

Inside the 'Zen Den' with the wicker fridge!

Hessian trim

15" steels

paint—which is why the 'German' writing on the doors is painted rather than stuck on.

Before she eventually took the plunge and started driving her T4 on a regular basis, and on longer drives, she wanted to make sure it was in perfect running order, so dropped it off at 360 Automotive. "Even though the MOT wasn't due for another six months, I got them to do a full check of the van so that it put my mind at rest that it was safe to drive," revealed Kelly. "Now, I even go on motorways, which I haven't driven on for over ten years," she's delighted to report. "I even drove by myself to Dubs in The Middle last year—which was the furthest I've ever taken my van," she added. Mind you she does freely admit that when it comes to parking, she will usually do a lap or two of a car park before parking, looking for a space that she can drive straight into. "If I have to reverse Alice into a space, then I usually take a photo to show people what I've done, because I'm so proud of myself!"

Alice? That comes from last year when she had an exhibition of her illustration work called wonderland—so Alice kinda seemed appropriate for her T4.

Obviously, Alice has received a woman's touch on the inside. The doors from the wooden pod have been removed and replace with a curtain (actually a skirt from a charity shop) and now has inspiration quotes painted on the end of it—to set her up for the day when she wakes up after a night in the van. She's also added a lot of funky lighting and some dream catchers hanging from the ceiling. The tapestry on the roof and the side panel both came from Camden Market and are colour coded to the exterior, as are the home-made curtains. And I don't just mean Kelly bought them and cut them to size. Using her creative printing skills (which she also teaches), she designed the skull logo and then printed it on the fabric; she remembers that black and red take forever to dry. Various other modifications to the interior come from friends and family or are collected from work

'German' signwriting

The inside is my spiritual Zen den, most of the items come from charity shops, are hand-made or recycled

as she drives around care homes in Gloucestershire. Such as the bedspread made by her mother, the pillows made by a friend in a care home and the statues on the dashboard from a charity sale in one of her homes. He husband Paul supplied the wicker removable fridge, as a 9th wedding anniversary present; she forgot to get him anything!

"It's always been an organic change with Alice, rather than anything being really planned," Kelly revealed. "The inside is my spiritual Zen den." she added and is keen to point out that most of the items come from charity shops, are hand-made or recycled. There are more changes to come. For starters she'd love a solar panel and a diesel heater—maybe not that eco-friendly, but it does get very cold when you are sleeping in Alice during the winter months. "Paul is also teaching me how to cover dashboards, so I can do my own printed / wrapped dash—we have an old T4 dashboard that I've been practicing on," said Kelly. And Paul has also promised to retrim Alice's front seats—well it would be rude not to as he's the boss at Paul Noble Interiors, so he trims seats for a living! She has already picked the brown/orange suede-effect material she wants to use. Kelly is also thinking about painting a mural on the outside. It's only a matter of time before she digs out the paint brushes and starts getting creative on the panels.

Finally, yes, she's well used to the 'rude' response she gets when she tells people her Swamper is called Alice!

T4

Kelly

And I'd like to thank...

My husband Paul AKA Paul Noble Interiors – Find him on Facebook

And www.Gloucester-Prison.co.uk - for the haunted, abandoned photoshoot location

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Van So Low

Demo vans abound, some we feature and most we reject. This bus was built to demonstrate one product and one product alone, the So Low coil-over suspension kit. We've wanted to feature it for a while and now we've finally got our van.

Alan Hayward Andrew Thompson

SUSPENSION
SoLow
ratiform
SUSPENSION

LDT Freshness

Before we start, can I assure all readers that the title is the only Star Wars reference to be found in this article...

So why were we so keen to feature this van? Well I first saw it in the metal at Ultimate Dubs held in Telford in March last year. And it just looked so right, the stance, the colour and those wheels! To be honest we try to stay away from sign written vans, but this one just had to go in the magazine. The next reason was that Andy Stretton, yes that Andy Stretton, head honcho at Transporter HQ and the owner the stunning cover bus in issue 92, well, he is also the man behind So Low. Now Andy, who was on the stand that day, was making some seriously bold claims about the quality of the ride of the then new kit, and to be fair he's not normally someone to make bold claims that he can't back up. Then we started hearing from independent sources that it really was that good. So, with those claims ringing in my ears and my knowledge of how good it looked we dispatched Andrew Thompson to take some pictures. Now Andrew, as those that know him will affirm, is no stranger to the ways of the low. His T4 has worn out more undertrays and gearbox mounts (the part that sits closest to the ground on a lowered T4) than he would care to admit. Andrew seemed the perfect man for the job, he was duly dispatched from his Bristol base to So Low's Lutterworth HQ.

The photos speak for themselves, and Andrew reported that he was seriously impressed, not only with the ride height, but also the ride! There was talk of wafting and comfort, not words regularly used to describe the ride on a seriously low van. It seems that Andy's claims and the reports we'd heard were borne out. Later I asked Andy to tell us a little about the history

Don't forget this bus is all about a lack of loft, nothing must distract from the absence of elevation

Bus Details

What did the van start as? Ex-Sky Panel Van

Colour? Matte NATO green

LWB/SWB SWB

BHP? 102

Wheels type and size? Rotiform LAS-R 19"

Tyres? 225/35/19

Lowered? -185cm on So Low coil-over kit and mods

Why is it special to you?

Because it just looks so right.

Twin Sliders, always a favourite

OK we hammed it up a bit...

And as an extra ‘Brucie Bonus’ it’s a twin slider!

of the kit. “So, here at Transporter HQ we have a reputation for getting vehicles low. Bilstein (suspension manufacturers par excellence) approached us about developing an extra low kit with them. The goal was to make a low suspension would that ride better than all other coil-over options, but low, properly low.” He suggested we “ask anyone with them fitted, they will confirm we got it right”. So Low Suspension was born.

So how low is So Low? Out of the box, without any modification Andy reckons you’ll get a genuine 100 mm to 130mm drop both front and rear on the adjusters. But this is on a bus from a company with a reputation for “getting low”, this is not a straight out of the box kind of bus. And whilst this is not a ‘How To’ we thought you’d like to know a bit of what’s involved. Apart from the So Low suspension kit, the bus has undergone an “extreme” hub mod, with the brake line brackets being welded and sleeved. Skinny CV boots have been added, as have machined top mounts, “a great mod to do to squeeze that extra bit of drop out of your lowering kit”. These particular top mount plates are from Transporter HQ, naturally and are genuine top mount plates that have been machined down to lower the bus by an additional 12-15mm. In addition, the rear ABS lines were re-routed, the rear bump stop nipples were shaved and some Powerflex built rear adjuster delete bushes were installed. All this adds up to, or should that be adds down to?—a drop of 185mm.

But this isn’t just about altitude, what of the rest of the bus? It arrived as a tidy ex-Sky van in Candy white with a few nice options, including a Sat-Nav, cruise control and rear parking sensors. And as an extra ‘Brucie Bonus’ it’s a twin slider! There were no serious mods planned, apart from those to the underpinnings. So, once the Sky branding was removed it was prepped for paint and given a few

Naked Rotiform LAS-R 19s

And with Aero Discs

All this adds up to, or should that be down to?—a drop of 185mm.

coats of matt NATO green. Not the first Transporter to go down this route, but it was a good choice. Don't forget this bus is all about a lack of loft, nothing must distract from the absence of elevation. The So Low branding was added, as was the Lowdown Transporters logo to the rear doors, Andy is a long-term contributor to the ground hugging brotherhood. New LED lights were added front and rear, whilst the commercial black bumpers were cleaned up and retained. Then we come to those wheels... the standard 16" steels that the van arrived on were put to one side and Andy fitted what he feels are the best wheels in this size (19") for this suspension set up, Rotiform LAS-Rs. We have included a picture of these in naked form, but for sheer coolness he added the Rotiform aerodiscs, that appear in most of the images. Yes, they're branded, but that doesn't make them any less fantastically tremendous, you may have gathered I'm a fan...

Inside, the van received some insulation and a complete carpet lining. All done to a very high standard, as you'd expect from Transporter HQ. The fact that it's 'just a van' doesn't mean that they will do anything other than their best. The cab was left standard, apart from the addition of some Transporter HQ seat covers to the single and twin seats up front. Unless of course you count the addition of some Lowdown air fresheners.

We hammed it up a bit for the shoot with a host of So Low boxes, but that is how the van is used. Yes, it goes to shows, but it's usually carrying all the kit to be sold on their stand or a load of camping gear, sometimes both. It also does service

It's used!

The So Low kit, however, has delivered an unexpected twist

at Transporter HQ lugging parts and accessories. So here we are then, practical and killer cool.

The So Low kit, however, has delivered an unexpected twist. Andy tells us, “We thought all our customers would have So Lows because they wanted the really low stance. What actually became apparent was that So Low set high gave a sensible 100mm drop, but the drive was even better, as you are riding at the top of the settings, with the spring under more compression. So long story short, So Lows set high, ride better than other well known coil-overs set low”. In a break with tradition he then went on to tell us, “After the success of this kit, we then worked with Bilstein to make a lift kit, we named this So Low B.I.G.H -Because I Got High”. Look out for a future issue of VW Bus for details of that vehicle, trust me it’s another cracker!

T5

Andy

And I'd like to thank:

Bilstein for working with us to get the kit so right.
And everybody at So Low and Transporter HQ for being epic!

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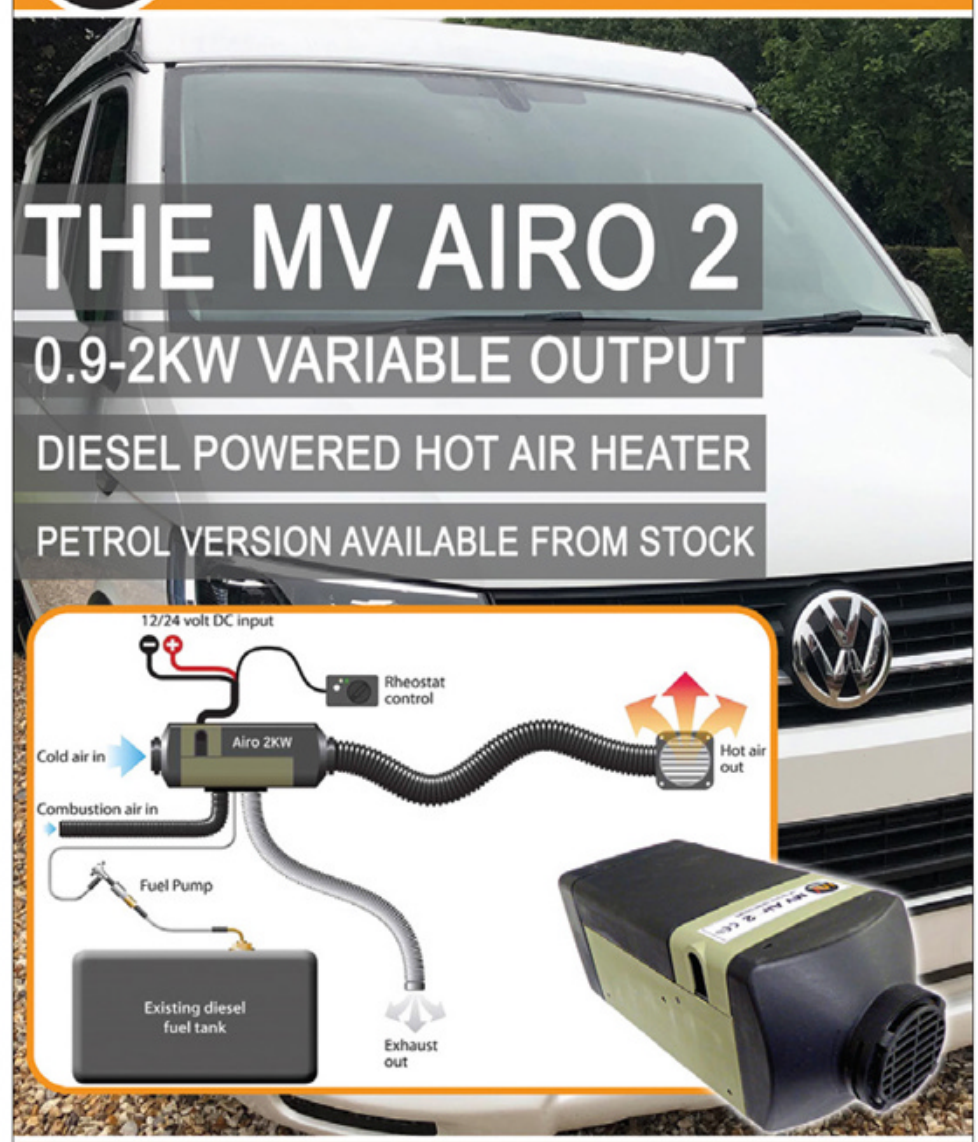

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Four-Wheel Laser Alignment Geometry Set-Up

Changing suspension parts, fitting new tyres, or just clocking up a lot of miles? You need to make sure your suspension is always adjusted for the best performance

Simon Cooke

You will need:
Ramp, four-wheel alignment technology, sockets, spanners. It's not especially technical - the technology does all the clever stuff - you just need to add some muscle. Of course, you need to have the fancy technology and ramp in the first place.

Cost:
Rear £15 - £25 (approx.)
Front £45 - £55 (approx.)

Difficulty rating

EASY

1

2

3

3a

Remember our recent step-by step features, where we fitted new uprated (PSB) suspension bushes to a T6? If not, they appeared in issue 88 for the fronts and 93 for the rears.

Now to make sure we are getting the best from our lovely new bushes, we needed to make sure the suspension is reset to factory settings, by checking the tracking, wheel alignment and geometry set up. To be honest this is not something you can really do at home—we have ramps and some serious state-of-the-art laser guided equipment, that and Will Chubbs, who knows which buttons to push, but we thought you'd like to know nevertheless.

Getting your suspension sorted will affect the way your VW handles and brakes. It will also have an effect on tyre wear and even how many miles per gallon you are achieving. Will says that with the current (rubbish) state of the roads, it's a good idea to get your settings checked at least twice a year!

In theory the job takes about an hour, depending on how many items need adjusting and how reluctant some of the bolts are to co-operate—we were lucky, as we'd recently fitted new bushes to the van, all the suspension had been recently taken apart and because we were not swapping from worn bushes to brand new ones the amount of correction needed was at a minimum. If we'd had more red figures that needed to change to green on our printout to start with, we would have needed to make more adjustments, to such as the joint where the shock absorber connects to the hub, this adjusts the camber on the front.

Will points out that not all laser alignment equipment was created equal and it's worth shopping around to get a quote before you splash the cash.

STEP ONE

These are the laser guided remote adjusting gauges we are going to be using.

STEP TWO

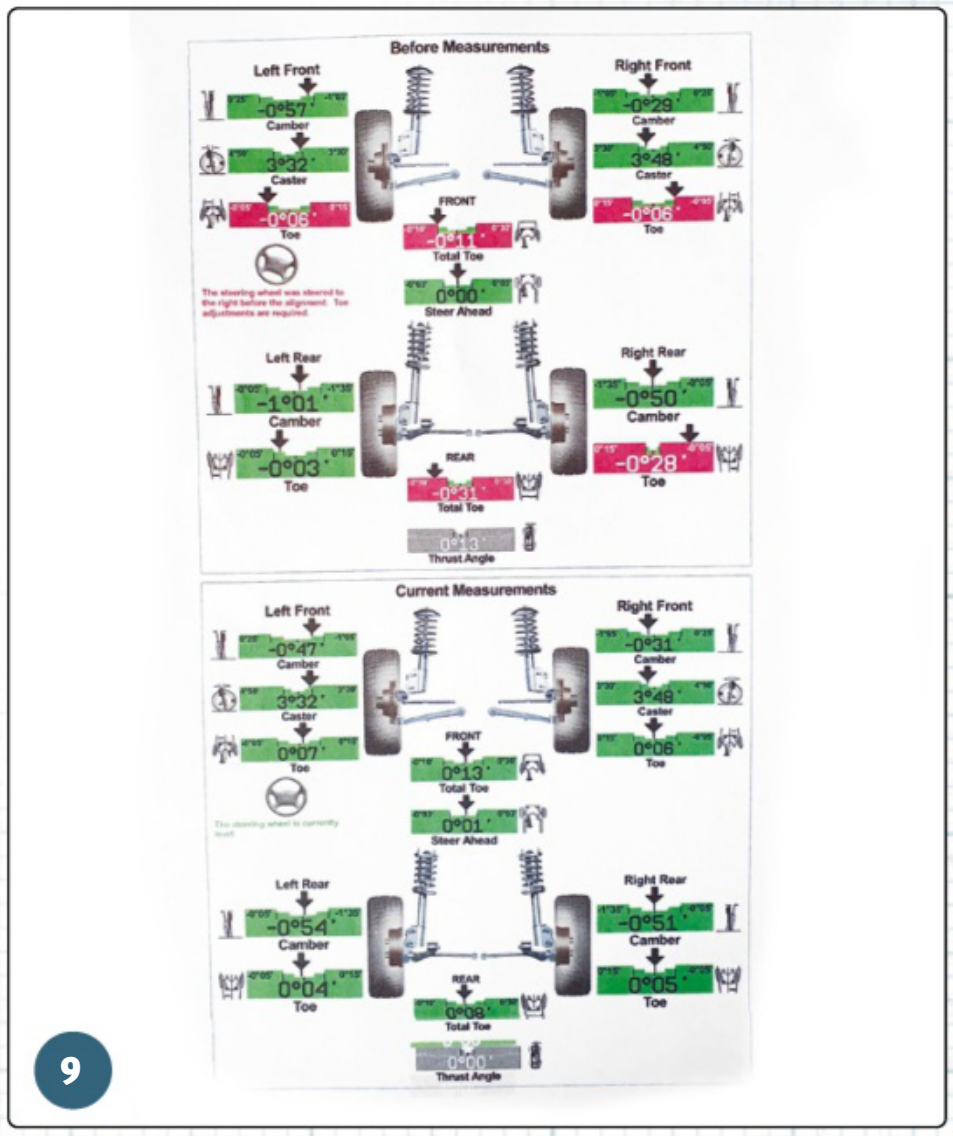
And they look like this from the other side.

STEP THREE

The gauges are attached to the wheels once the van is up on the ramps; they will correct/compensate for a buckled wheel.

STEP FOUR

Make sure the steering wheel is straight and clamp it into position.



STEP FIVE

The gauges 'talk' to the computer, to work out which settings need to change and display them on screen—this is the rear and we need to get all the setting from the red zone into the green.

STEP SIX

We start work on the rear and as you can see from the screen in step 5 the camber at the back is ok, but the toe needs adjusting. Camber angle is the measure in degrees of the difference between the wheel's vertical alignment perpendicular to the surface. If a wheel is perfectly perpendicular to the surface, its camber would be 0 degrees. Camber is described as negative when the top of the tyres begin to tilt inward towards the wheel arches. Consequently, when the top of the tyres begin to tilt away from the vehicle it is considered positive. Toe represents the angle derived from pointing the tyres inward or outward from a top-down view—much like looking down at your toes and angling them inward or outward.

STEP SEVEN

This 24 mm nut/bolt on the rear suspension is used to adjust the rear toe setting—it's got an elongated washer to allow adjustment. Slacken it off—check the screen until it's back in the green zone and then tighten up again. We didn't need to move it much—Will has seen vehicles where the setting is off the scale to start with! The other side of the T6 didn't need adjusting at all.

STEP EIGHT

At the front we just need to fine tune the toe again. That's adjusted via another 24mm nut and a 12mm nut. Again, adjust until your readings are in the green.

STEP NINE

Here is the printout; the top half shows the start of the process with some figures in red—the bottom is the end of the process. where all readings have been changed to green. Don't forget to remove the equipment before you drive off again.

Going Baltic

Take one brand new VW California, two week's holiday, four mates and visit eight countries. Travelling to the far corner of Eastern Europe couldn't have been easier

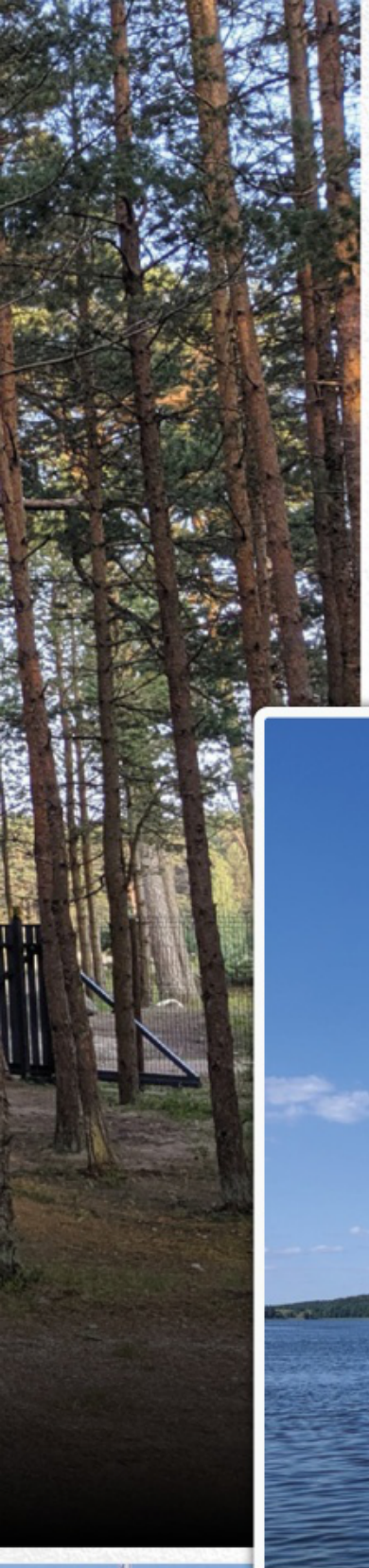
Ryan Sivyer Ryan Sivyer, Vikki West-Kelsey, Louis Francis-Patteson and Alice Marples

Working for one of the UK's leading VW California and Mercedes Marco Polo specialist comes with its perks. The main one being the annual CamperVantastic Road Trip. This year, with two weeks in the bank it was decided to see how far east we could get. Armed with a brand-new VW T6 California Ocean with only forty-six miles on the clock, we left the leafy London suburb of Forest Hill at one am on a Saturday morning last June....

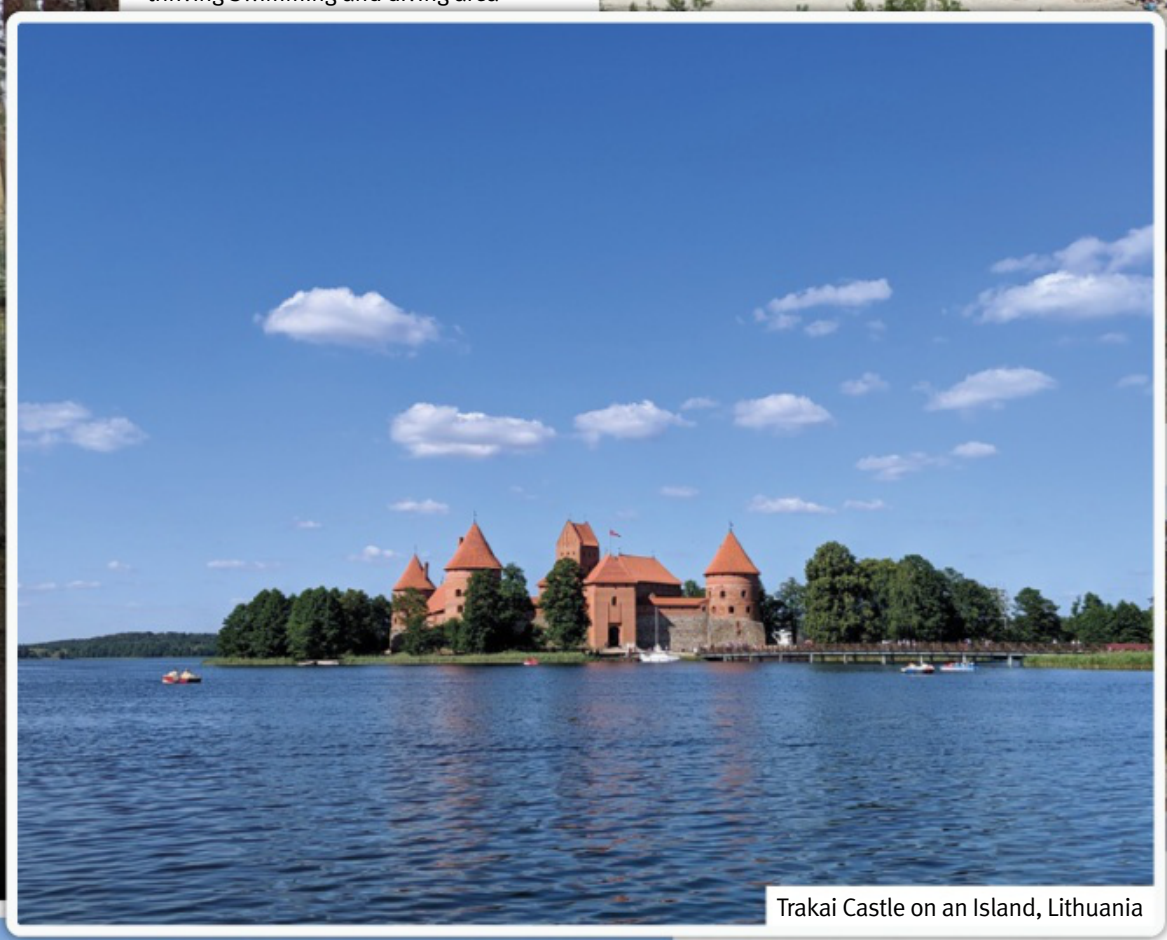
On landing in Dunkirk, we pointed our campervan vaguely in the direction of Kiel, in the far North of Germany. This is where we would pick up the next DFDS ferry to Lithuania. Travelling through the night from London meant that we were in Ghent pretty quickly and about the right time for breakfast. We intended to stop over "In Bruges" at first, but we were sick of the Colin Farrell and Brendan Gleeson quotes before we'd even left England!

After stopping over near Arnhem in the Netherlands we make our tracks through Germany and really get to see how the 204PS T6 holds up on the Autobahn, with the accompanying Kraftwerk album on of course. After a quick stop for some Curry Wurst and a stein of local beer in Kiel, we head for the ferry port. We board in the late afternoon, just in time for the bar to open and have a few drinks with the long-distance lorry drivers until the early hours. After a good night's sleep, we wake up and we're already halfway across the Baltic Sea, just in time for DFDS to serve up a great breakfast buffet, which

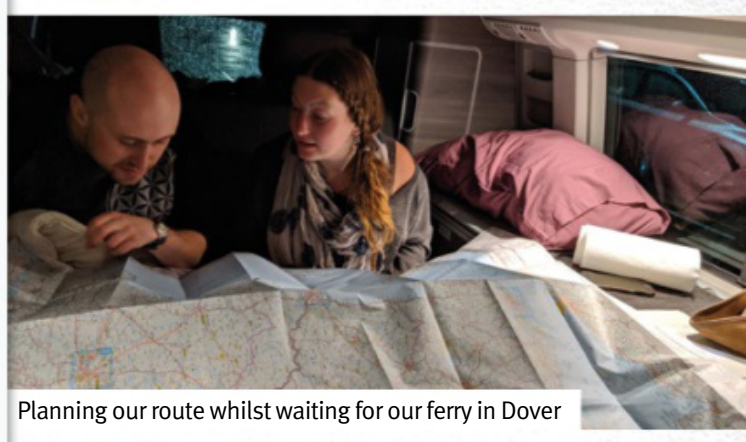
Hill of Crosses in Lithuania, a destination of Pilgrimage



Disused Rummu Quarry and prison, now a thriving Swimming and diving area



Trakai Castle on an Island, Lithuania



Planning our route whilst waiting for our ferry in Dover

Our first free camping spot on the Curionia Spit on the first night in Lithuania

After a good night's sleep, we wake up and we're already halfway across the Baltic Sea

we made the most of and enjoyed the rest of the afternoon watching the Lithuanian coast getting closer and closer.

We arrive in Klaipeda on a Sunday afternoon, as the ferry cruises into port we get a great view of the industrial area of the town on one side and the Curonian Spit, a UNESCO World Heritage Site and our first planned stop of the trip. One of the best coastlines in the world awaits us as we disembark the cruise ferry and jump onto a small ferry that takes us over to the National Park. Our first beer and a swim in the Baltic sea is unspoilt by any buildings, all you can see is sea and forest. The Spit is shared between Lithuania and Russia's Kaliningrad Oblast, a large exclave of Russia that without extra visas and vehicle insurance we can only look towards. The watch towers along the beach at the border are a reminder that we really are on the edge of Europe already.

After a morning swim from our free camping spot (A car park with a portaloo, shared by a few other Motorhomes) we head off the spit, to the mainland and North toward Latvia. We'll get to explore more of Lithuania later in our trip. The City of Leipaja has an interesting history, held by various militaries over the years you can really see the various cultures have changed the area. A visit to the Northern Forts which have been left to crumble to the sea and Karostas Prison in the North of the city and we learn a lot about this areas' history. We take the opportunity to use a campsite for much needed showers and to fill up our vans water tank. We found that most campsites in the area are near lakes and rivers, so we are

No Man's Land looking toward the Russian border on the Curonia Spit

never far away from a swimming spot. It's also at this point where we realise that we should have brought the canoes along.

Everywhere we drove in Latvia the roads seemed to be in a constant state of improvement. Proof that the economies of these three countries is on the up as they invest in infrastructure. The difference is that they don't really close the roads when they are rebuilding, so we have to dodge lots of workmen and at one point had to stop and wait for the foreman to sign off a certain part of the road, so that we could be the first to pass on this new road! We travel up to Riga, Latvia's capital city and our first city stop. The City Camping spot we find is a great use of space, parking up in the cities' exhibition centre car parks and surrounding spaces. We had great facilities and only a thirty minute walk into the city centre along the river. We pick up a walking tour in the morning and explore the city's sights before retiring to a traditional Latvian Bar for dinner and dancing.

We'd managed to time this trip to coincide with the Baltics longest heatwave in years so we forget that this area can get very cold in the Winter (baltic, almost) so when we stumble upon a bobsleigh run in the middle of Latvia we already start planning a trip back in Winter.

On the way to the Medieval town of Cesis, we find castles to explore before searching the nearby National Park for a place to camp. We discover a spot on the Gauja River, complete with a shelter which came in handy when two huge thunderstorms pass on over

A quick stop over in Ghent

Wild/Free camping is tolerated and even encouraged in the Baltics, National and regional parks all have picnic areas and toilets. One we found in Estonia even had a small hut, fireplace and free wood and an axe we could use, building a campfire really helped with the mozzies! We travelled in June, so the fleets of motorhomes weren't out in force, most of the places we stayed were empty and we weren't disturbed.

Packing the VW California in Forest HIll.

Riverside free camping, shortly before a huge storm passed over

Architecture in Latvia

Colourful streets in the arty districts of Vilnius

Welcome to Germany

First beer in the Baltics reminds us more of Ibiza

We couldnt pass Belgium without picking up a few beers

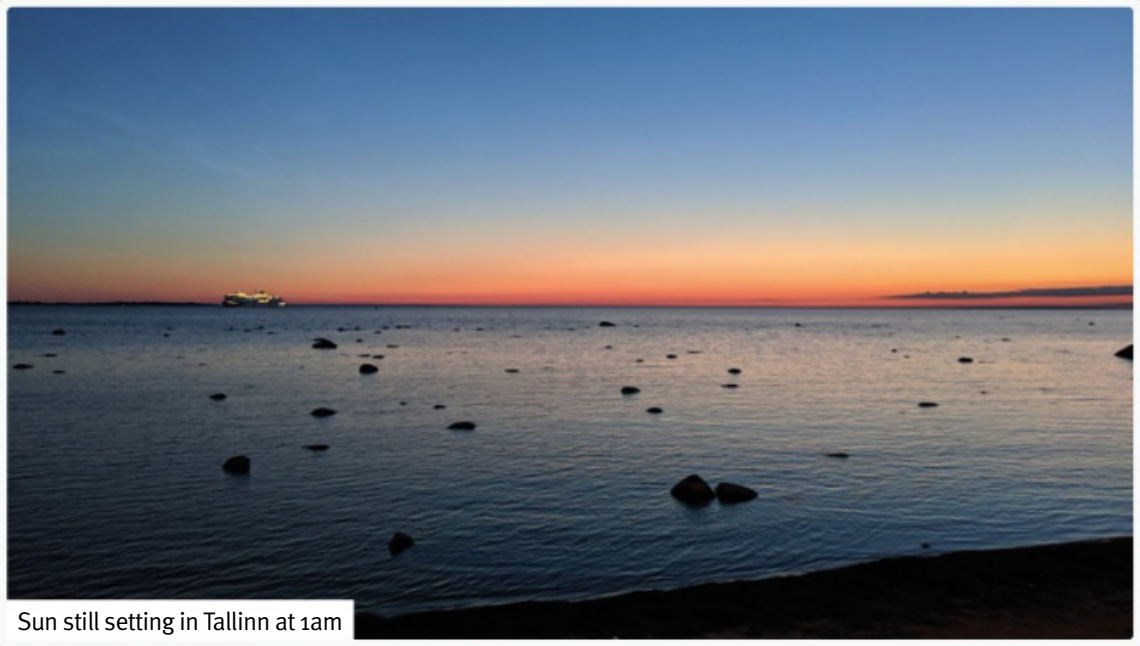
Our first beer and a swim in the Baltic sea is unspoilt by any buildings, all you can see is sea and forest.

during dinner. We're completely un-phased by the other two that pass overnight in our California and Khyam Igloo tent.

Moving North up the coast towards Estonia it's hard to believe that there were once hard borders here as recently as 2007. The old border houses and customs buildings are left derelict or turned into petrol stations or cafes. We pass through Estonia's Baltic coast, hidden from view on the coastal road by thick forest, but with plenty of picnic spots along the road we can find the perfect lunch spot and swimming spot on the beach. Rummu Quarry is our next stop and a highlight of the trip. Originally two neighbouring prisons, the quarry was dug by prisoners in the 1930s. The prisons closed in 2012 and the quarry filled up with water. Now a water-sports venue you can dive down to see the old quarry buildings or just relax on the waterline and enjoy the crystal blue water.

The historic city of Tallinn is nearby, so we head there for a couple of days. We're close to mid-June and at the furthest point north that we'll reach, we are keen to witness the long days and short nights. Local mead and "Medieval Themed Banquets" are on offer in the city so after a local banquet and some herbal beers we arrive back to our parking stop at one am and manage to catch the sun still trying to set in the distance.

Back on the road heading South we free camp another night in Estonia and head towards Lithuania through Latvia. Passing through lots of small villages to pick up local produce and check out the less trodden path. We even get stopped by border control somewhere in deepest Latvia, another reminder that we are not far from the Russian border,



Sun still setting in Tallinn at 1am

Balancing stones in Lithuania

One of Gustave Eiffel's lesser known projects in Latvia (designer of the Eiffel Tower)

Welcome to Lativa, disused border posts are found on all border crossings

Lighthouse on Curonian Spit

A shout out to DFDS here, Dover-Dunkirk was as smooth as ever, we got the Saturday 4am crossing with the premium lounge upgrade, which was empty, so it felt like we have the boat to ourselves. Kiel - Klaipeda Was the smoothest crossing ever and with the cabins we had the nineteen-hour crossing just sailed by.

We explore Uzupis, a declared independent republic with honorary citizens such as the Dalai Lama!

carrying our V5 and insurance documents meant this was a very easy process and we were allowed to pass in good time. Our only rainy day of the trip is used to put away 250 miles as we head south through Latvia and into Lithuania again.

After only visiting Lithuania briefly on the first day, we are excited to be exploring the eastern side of the country, its capital city Vilnius is a UNESCO world heritage site and an arty University town. We explore Uzupis, a declared independent republic, with its street art and galleries and honorary citizens such as the Dalai Lama! A great place to spend some time it it's bars and cafes. We opted to stay at a Youth Hostel with campervan parking in Vilnius, but with no more spaces to park the van we had no other choice than to take a room and take advantage of having separate beds! On the way out of the city we visit Trakai Castle, built on a large island surround by lakes, we stop for the night nearby watching hot air balloons across the lake.

Into our last days of our trip back to Klaipeda for the ferry we pass through the spectacular Hill of Crosses, a site of pilgrimage where thousands of Christian Crosses have been left by pilgrims since the 1830s. We reach Klaipeda and, despite the temptation to do another lap of the Baltics, we board the ferry back to Kiel for the long drive back to London. We board the ferry on the 20th June, strategically planned so that we can watch the midsummer sun set as we leave port and get up early to watch the Summer Solstice sunrise over the Baltic Sea.

If you want to see more images from the trip checkout #CVTgoesbaltic on Instagram. If you want to know more about Campervantastic, or hire one of their Californias visit www.campervantastic.com

Northern Forts in Lativa are left to be swallowed by the sea

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Congratulations to Matt Epps, who's stunning T4 camper won this year's Bus Of The Year competition! Voted for by the readers, the bus was originally featured in issue 86. In honour of his success and as tradition dictates, we are awarding him this month's centre spread.

BUS OF THE YEAR

VW BUS

T4&5+

PeepShow

Whether it's a show winner or daily driver, share with us why you love your bus, this month all the vans are from the VW Coachbuilt Collective, find them on Facebook.

T5

Scottish Sandhurst

This is my VW T5 Sandhurst which was built in the UK by Autosleeper in 2006. It has been treated to a T5.1 Sportline upgrade and has genuine Davenport 17" alloys and lots of little custom touches. It's the perfect size for myself and my wife, Lesley, and our big Labradoodle, Alfie. This setup has taken as through France, Germany, Switzerland and the length and breadth of this country. We love the fact that we can camp in it right through the winter. The interior layout is a front lounge and dining area, which easily converts to a double bed, with swivel front captain chairs, a central kitchen and spacious rear washroom with separate shower cubicle. The kitchen area has ample worktop space, a sink, a hob with three gas and one electric rings, an oven and grill, plus a three-way fridge with a freezer compartment. Heating is provided via a diesel Eberspacher system. We love it and fit in as many VW festivals as possible with our club Forthdubs.

Tom Liddle

T4

Rare Karmann

Our van is a 2003 Karmann Colorado Edition, built to celebrate the twenty-fifth anniversary of the company's involvement with Volkswagen's Transporter model. A 2.5tdi it's known to be one of only four Editions in the UK. *(Coincidently we featured another one of the four in issue 92—Alan)*

After the birth of our son, Jack, we found our T4 Cali freestyle a little tight, but I was reluctant to stray away from the T4 as we have had T4s for over ten years and love the look and build quality. We had spotted the Coach Built display at Leeds VW festival in the past and decided to look into the Colorado further. After a surprise chat with John Cunningham at the Chester food & drink festival last year my mind was made up and a deposit left on my mate's van, who had decided to move to a T5 Colorado TI.

As you can see the van has had various mods, engine wise a Pendle remap and larger injectors to up the bhp to circa 160, the van doesn't hang around considering its size. Upgraded brakes to VR6 313mm with braided hoses.

Aesthetically, fully colour coded lower trims with all new decals with a nod to the originals they also tie in with the blue interior. Lowered using H&R rear spring kit on 19", two-piece staggered O.Z Racing split rims.

We love the van (especially Jack) and have sites and shows booked throughout the upcoming year to get out and enjoy it. I have many more plans for the van in the future. If you see us feel free to come and have a beer/chat.

John, Hannah & Jack Gibson.

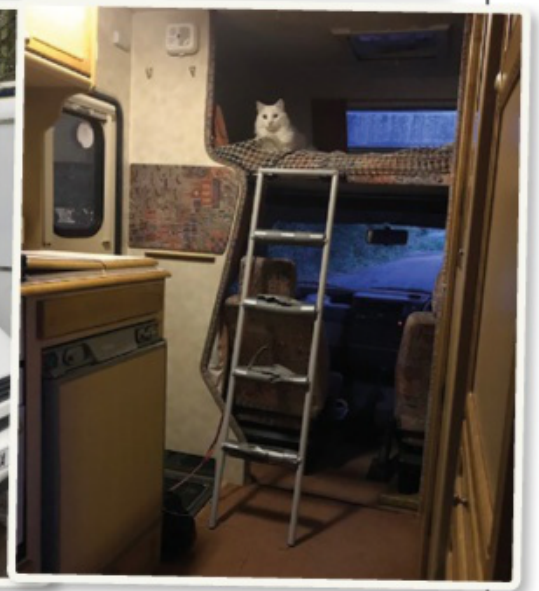
T5

Life And Times

My T5 Karmann Colorado is a 650 model from 2009. This is a 4/5 birth Karmann that replaced our LWB T5, when we imported her from Southern Ireland in October 2016. A few upgrades have included fitting coil-overs and air assist suspension, a facelift, new alloys and an interior refit. So far, we have doubled her mileage travelling around Europe and the UK festivals. Known as the party bus to the Yorkshire VW Club, many a fun night has been had as she comfortably seats eight in the lounge area. You can follow our trips on Facebook, search for the Life and Times of Karmann page. My Karmann gets used and we currently enjoy around 100 nights a year in her.

Ben Farrer

T4



Cool Compass

This is our T4 Coachbuilt Compass 310rl. We've had it for around three months now and have been away camping in it a few times already over the winter with our deaf indoor cat! Coming from a converted T4 and a couple of T5s it was time for a spacious Coachbuilt. I've already upgraded the front end, with a VR6 splitter, added some LED lights front and rear and some seventeen-inch banded steels. I've also lowered it and fitted a double din stereo. I'm in the process of removing all the blue stickers and fitting a diesel heater rather than the gas one it came with. I'm looking forward to many trips away this year and a few more upgrades.

Adam

Show Yours

GET YOUR BUS FEATURED

Send a brief description about your Bus (130 words max) and three high-res pictures to: **alan.hayward@vwbusmagazine.com** with the subject 'Reader's Rides'.

Chromodynamics

Chromodynamics describes what happens if you let Van Haven loose on a Chrome Yellow T6 Kombi. Also defined as a fantastically flexible and superbly accomplished cruiser, with bells on!

Alan Hayward Bizzle's Mate

There may be a lot of parts, but somehow the whole is still greater than the sum of its parts

Actually, chromodynamics is something about the colour property of quarks, antiquarks and gluons, whatever they are? I just liked the word; it made a nice title...

A couple of issues ago, issue 92 to be precise, we ran a shop tour for Van Haven. I described how it was unusual for me to visit a company and not really know that much about them prior to my arrival. I'd heard of them, of course, we'd even featured a couple of vans that were supplied by them, but that was about it. When I rocked up at Van Haven in Dorset, I was impressed by what I found.

On the forecourt was this stunning yellow Kombi and after a brief nose round the bus, I just knew we had to feature it. It turned out that this bus was the first of their now trademark 'Haven 6TT' Kombis. For the uninitiated, which included me up till that point, a Haven 6TT is a stylish Kombi upgrade that can be purchased off the shelf from them, like this one, or it can be a menu-based design choice that you make in conjunction with Van Haven, when you order a van from them. As they have been in charge of the option choices, they have pretty much thrown everything at it, including, rather splendidly, a kitchen sink, more on that later.

Let's start with the basics. First registered in 2018, this T6 started life as a 204bhp diesel Kombi, with the DSG box, in Chrome Yellow. Then Van Haven got their hands on it... In no particular order, they lowered the bus 50mm on a premium H&R suspension kit and fitted some cool twenty-inch DTMs in gloss black from Riva. They added their own exclusive 'Haven 6TT' front and rear spoiler kit. Then they got busy with DRL headlights and grille lights, black roof bars and black side bars. And all this was before they added their 5-Point Black Optics pack which consists of a deep gloss black upper

Now its a camper

Slidpods add to the flexibility

Gloss black details

Nestling behind all that tactile splendour is a host of hidden luxury

radiator badge grille, some deep gloss black A, B and C grilles, more deep gloss black in the form of lower fog-light A & C grilles and wing mirror bases and finally some optic tinted rear lights. Now I give you this shopping list of options, just to prove how extensive the subtle modifications to this van are. I didn't even include the wind deflectors or the tinted privacy window on the list. Suffice it to say the interior list is even more extensive. The overall effect is to create a subtle yet stunning evolution of the Kombi. There may be a lot of parts, but somehow the whole is still greater than the sum of its parts!

Inside, it has become a luxury cruiser with seats for five adults, vented black leather seats in a custom design, with co-ordinating yellow stitching no less. Alcantara abounds throughout, as does gloss black trimming, both to the dash and throughout the cabin. Nestling behind all that tactile splendour is a host of hidden luxury, 100mm eco-recycled Dacron insulation, some double depth gold aluminium foil vapour barrier and a layer of ANR 35db sound deadening. Sorry, I've started geek listing again, like some crazed James Bond baddy who monologues every time they get the chance, instead of getting on with killing Jimbo. If you have a good look around like I did, you'll find some choice extras like the sunglasses holder and the roof mounted centre storage console. I want to wax lyrical about the

Upgraded cab

Open the rear tailgate, look beyond the cool touch sensitive lights set into it and behold the work of another market leader

two almost hidden 300-watt amp Kicker speakers, the four backlit USB sockets and the six flush brushed aluminium light fittings. But I don't have space, I need to tell you about what goes on out back.

Open the rear tailgate, look beyond the cool touch sensitive lights set into it and behold the work of another market leader. Van Haven have made this 'luxury cruiser' even more flexible by installing one of Slidepods clever Kombi beds. When not in use the bed sits behind the rear seats and looks for all the world like a low parcel shelf. Fold the rear seats forward until they're flat, then open the hinged bed base forward to meet the rear of those seats, then unfold the mattress to cover the whole shebang and you have, in under two minutes, made your bed!

As if that wasn't clever enough, hidden underneath the bed and revealed only when the tailgate is open, is a nifty Slidepods kitchen unit. When slid out this reveals a two-ring gas burner and the aforementioned "kitchen sink" as well as copious storage and a detachable table/worksurface.

So, what we have here then is a veritable Swiss Army Knife of a bus. It can be a luxurious family cruiser, small enough to fit in a standard parking space and into almost every height restricted car park, but large enough to carry five adults and a massive amount of luggage. The rear seats could be removed to free up almost all of

Bus details

What did the van start as? Kombi

Colour? Chrome Yellow

LWB/SWB SWB

BHP? 204

Wheels type and size? Riva DTM 20"

Tyres? 275/40/20

Lowered? 50mm on H&R suspension kit

Why is it special to you? The Bus was the very first Haven 6TT that we built, it had almost every conceivable option we had available at the time.

So, what we have here then is a veritable Swiss Army Knife of a bus

its original van carrying capacity. It can be a day van with the option to make a cuppa or even a meal when at your desired location. Or within a couple of minutes, it can be turned in to a camper for two people, add a cab bunk bed for a small child and it could be three. If you really went to town and got them to add a pop-top and it could be a camper for five! And all this is done in a bus that is cooler than cool, and yellower than... the yellow pages. There's one for teenagers...

T6

Van Haven

And we'd like to thank...

All our customers past, present and future. Plus, all the Van Haven techs, who worked so very hard to build the beautiful Kombi.

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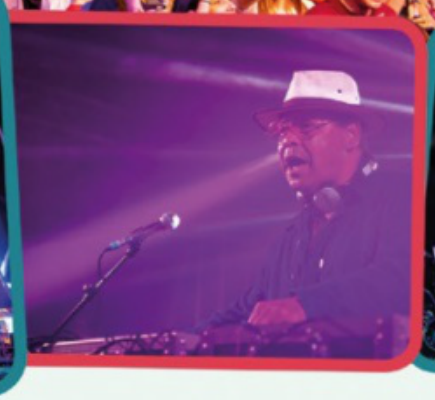

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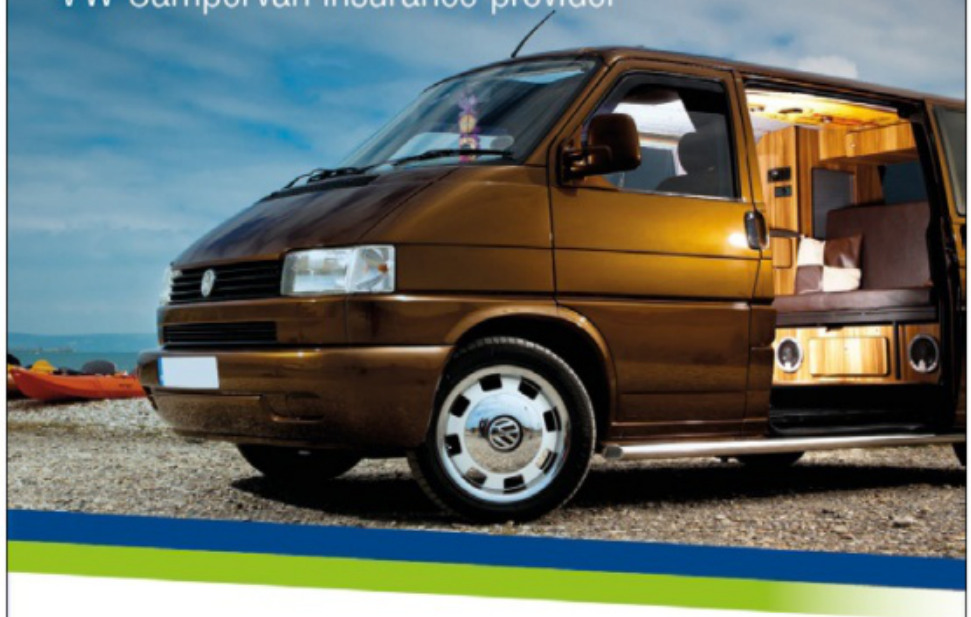

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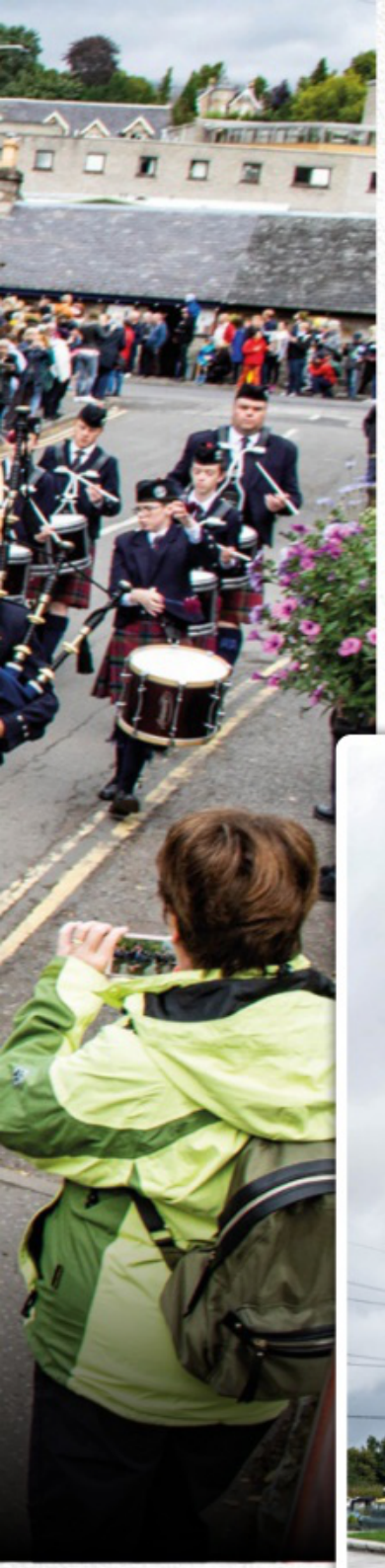
A Highland Fling

When you have friends coming on an international tour to take in the sights of Scotland, you really have no excuse but to jump in your camper and join them

Steve "autoholic Edwards

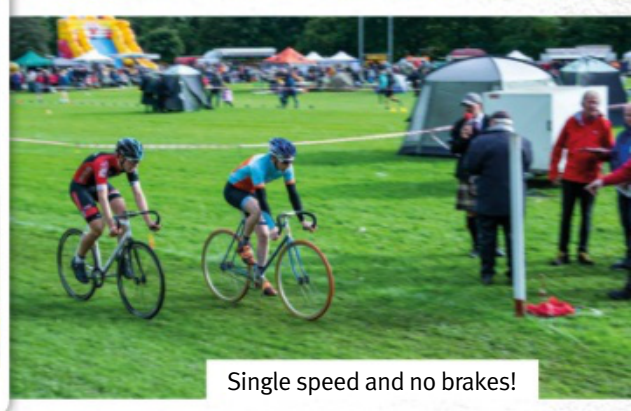
Our friends were coming in from Vancouver in Canada and they really wanted to attend a Highland Games and as luck would have it while they were in the country the 167th Pitlochry Games were being held, unsurprisingly, in the town of Pitlochry.

My wife's family is from Royal Deeside which is around thirty miles west of Aberdeen and so that means our usual route is an easterly one. So this time for a change, we headed north and took a more central track. We decided to break our journey up with a stopover in the dog friendly Village Inn in Kirtlebridge near Lockerbie, to give ourselves a treat rather than spend another night in the van. Being near Lockerbie and never having visited the two memorial sites, we decided to pay our respects, but didn't take photos. Moving on from Lockerbie it turns out that Falkirk was in the direct path of our destination, which meant that a couple more stops needed to be scheduled in. To visit The Falkirk Wheel, and The Kelpies. The wheel is the world's first and only rotating boat lift, it was opened in 2002 by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II and replaced the staircase of eleven locks that had previously linked the Forth & Clyde and Union canals which took nearly a day to traverse, but which were dismantled in 1933. Work started to re-join the two canals in 1998 and the wheel was constructed from 1200 tonnes of steel. It contains over 15,000 bolts and had over 1000 construction workers building it. Each of the 600 tonne gondolas hold 500,000 litres of water which is enough to



Milton Fonab campsite

The famous Kelpies



Single speed and no brakes!

People flock to the games

fill an Olympic swimming pool, but astonishingly it only takes 1.5kWh of energy to turn it, that's the same amount as is needed to boil eight kettles. Of course, no trip to the area would be complete without one to see the Kelpies. A pair of 30 metre, or 295 hands, high equine sculptures, that were erected in 2013. They are made of 928 stainless steel plates, weigh 1200 tonnes each and straddle the Forth & Clyde canal.

From there we made our way up to the town of Pitlochry and the unusually named Milton of Fonab Caravan site, as it turns out Milton is a Scottish word for a mill or a farm or hamlet adjacent to one. The site has a number of static caravans, some owned by individuals and others available for rent, they also have three areas set aside for touring caravans, motorhomes and camper vans and a small area specifically for tents. There are three separate amenity blocks one had two very modern wet rooms on the gent's side, to accompany the older stalls with their shower cubicles and toilets. There was plenty of hot water and even with the site at maximum capacity, there was no evidence of queuing. Fortunately, the games were being held in the recreation ground just across the River Tummel. The river has an usual feature, as there is a dam in Pitlochry that had been built to form Loch Faskally. Not much of interest there, you might think, but the dam has a fish ladder so that the salmon can continue their migration. A sight to see when in full swing apparently, but sadly not when we were there. Pitlochry itself is a tourist destination most of the year with its fair share of whisky distilleries in the region. But for one weekend a year, people flock in from all over the world, to see the games.

We stayed in the Milton of Fonab Caravan Park which is well appointed park with plenty of room for Tourers and is very easy to reach as it's pretty much in the centre of Scotland. For full details, and to book, you can find their website at www.fonab.co.uk.

Competitive dancing

The Falkirk Wheel

Part of 'The Heavys'

The games have evolved since they were re-established in Scotland in 1852, they now include track and field events, and cycling, in addition to the more traditional disciplines. The cycles involved have just one speed, but no brakes and on wet grass, it is Scotland after all, they can prove to be an interesting spectacle. They have been joined by the usual running and jumping events, Highland dancing, bagpiping and the events called the Heavys, which is what the people really love to see. The Heavys comprise of putting the stone, this is traditionally the first event and used to feature a smooth stone from the riverbed. This could have weighed in at whatever the organisers felt like, but these days the stones are either sixteen or twenty-two pounds, that's seven and ten kilos respectively. Throwing the hammer is conducted in an area with a safety net on three sides, the thrower digs the spikes located on the front of their shoes into the ground and the four foot six inch hammer, or 1.4 meters if you prefer, is swung around the throwers head to gain momentum and then released. All the events are quite dramatic, but the one everyone comes to see is the tossing of the caber, the caber is a tapered tree trunk that is usually 150lbs, 68kgs, and around nineteen feet or six meters long. The competitor must first lift the caber at the narrower end, no mean feat in itself, and rest it on their shoulder. Then run as fast as possible, before coming to a dead stop and tossing the end into the air, so that the wider end lands on the ground and hopefully, if they have gained enough momentum the narrower end will then pass over it and land on the ground facing away from the competitor. There is a belief that this is a distance event, when it's actually about accuracy, the competition is judged as if on a clock face with the competitor standing at six o'clock, the closest to twelve o'clock wins. A perfect twelve had never been achieved at Pitlochry, that was until last year's event!

You need to have your head on a swivel at the Highland Games though, as there are numerous events happening around the field at the same time, which is quite handy as one leg of the Tug of War competition can take twenty minutes or more to complete!

To close the event all the pipe bands joined together to form one and I defy anyone not to be moved by the sound they make, it's incredible. In addition to our friend's coming in from Canada, they'd booked into a very nice Airbnb, other friends came from Brighton and Oxfordshire to join us in the campsite, as well as some of my wife's family. Her sister and her husband had recently bought a caravan for the princely sum of £300 and after some painting and some tender loving care it had been returned to its former glory. If you're are heading to Scotland between the end of May and the end of September why not find an event wherever you're staying, all the info you need can be found at www.shga.co.uk There's more to see than just the NC500.

Pitlochry's name comes from the Gaelic "Pit Cloich Aire", which means "Place of the Sentinel Stone" it was a Pict settlement that grew over the years. It's very proud of its Victorian heritage and the town grew once the railway arrived, Queen Victoria was a frequent visitor.

Busfest

Some say that size is everything, and Busfest sure is big

Simon Cooke

If you want the hustle and bustle (do people still say that?) of a big VW show, then you could do a lot worse then get yourselves down to Malvern in September for the annual OTT VW show that is Busfest. 2019 was the 26th running of the event and with 25 years' experience under their belt, they certainly seem to be getting the hang of it.

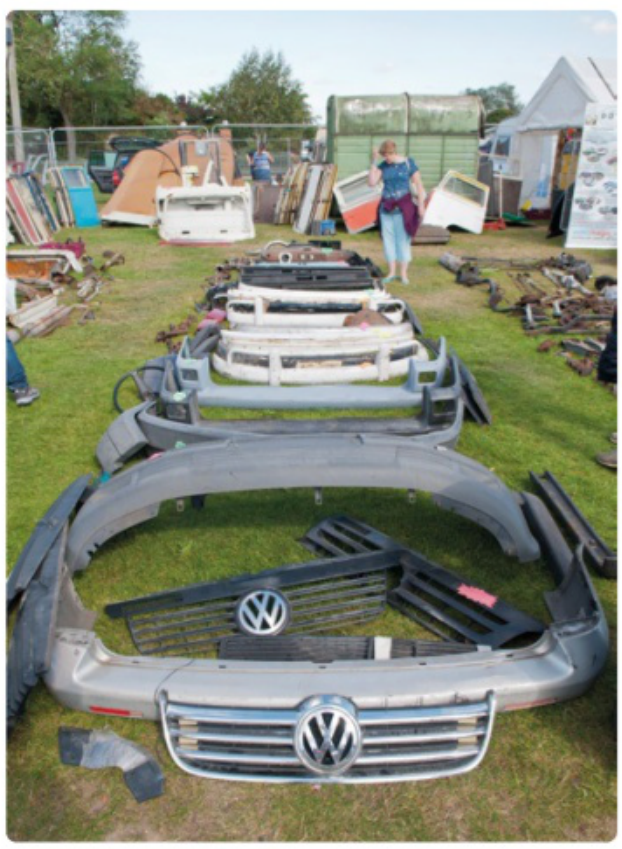
The Malvern Showground is a full-time show/event location and there are certainly some advantages, when the Busfest team roll into town every year. So you have proper roads—very handy in the event of bad weather to get in and out of the location rather than grass which turns into mud when you add water, proper working toilets, benches to sit on when your feet ache (which they will), and even several huge under cover display areas—again—worth their weight in gold should the weather not be on their side. These undercover areas were used by some of the many traders, for VW displays, for entertaining children, and hosting the creepy crawly display. They were also in use for entertaining the adults with a wide range of activities including drinking, singing and dancing, and even getting your eyebrows plucked; if that's what floats your boat. There was also an area set up as a full-on beauty salon to pamper men and women. However there still

Of course you can't fit all the traders undercover and the rest of the trade area is scattered all across the showground

This bus is featured in this issue

Another former feature

Outcaster, a previous feature van



The official fire bus

A future feature

Super SWB

wasn't enough space undercover, hence the massive marquee which was erected to host the main live bands during the evening.

Of course, you can't fit all the traders undercover and the rest of the trade area is scattered all across the showground—rows and rows of traders selling a diverse range of VW and non-VW related goodies. from a fully converted and ready to drive home Swamper T6, including the kitchen sink, to stands just selling kitchen sinks. Busfest certainly gets the award for largest trade village that I've walked around this year—I know there were still items there that I missed.

If it was activities you were looking for, then the place to be was one of the display areas, where you could witness death-defying stunts on motorbikes and mountain bikes, or T3s being put through their paces, driving over obstacles that VW never intended and that would have Mr VW turning in his grave. If T3s, Syncros in particular were your thing, then you could have been drooling around the display there for hours. It included several very rare items, including the world's only short wheel base version, a 6-wheeler and even a working fire engine, which is the official Busfest fire support vehicle—as featured in our sister mag—VW Camper & Commercial.

You could find all manner of lovely VWs lined up for your viewing pleasure, from MkI Golfs to Rat Splits and slammed T6s

Sunday was Show & Shine day—in yet another display arena, where you could find all manner of lovely VWs lined up for your viewing pleasure from MkI Golfs to Rat Splits and slammed T6s—this year's Rat selection was certainly worthy of note.

Busfest once again went large and then went home for another year. The date for next year is set for September 11-13th—find all the details on FB or the Internet.

T3X6

The Joy Of Six

With a 2.8 petrol VR6 under the bonnet of a tasty T4, who could blame the owner for enjoying his bus?

Steve Cooke

Long story short, Toz Torrance needed a new T4 to replace his then current T4.

The longer version is that he'd been waiting to cross a roundabout in Swindon, when he was involved in an accident. "A Golf drove right up the back of me and it completely folded up the rear and my T4 was declared a write-off," said Toz. "I'd only just come out of hospital after a hip operation and I ended up going straight back in again." Turned out that his T4 (which he was halfway through converting from work van into camper) was the second vehicle in two weeks that the Golf owner had written off in accidents; I would not like to be paying his insurance!

The engine was stripped and loads of new parts were added

He found a replacement on e-Bay. It cost Toz £2000, plus what was left of his van in part-exchange with the seller. He'd hadn't owned a twin-slider before, but it seemed like a good idea for work, he could fit the seats back in when he needed to use it as a people carrier; best of both worlds. "At the time I was only going to use it for work and family duties, I had no plans to turn it into a camper. I didn't really

More love for the twin sliders

VW sure shoe-horned that lot in

18" BBS rims

Bus details

What did the van start as? T4 Caravelle

Colour? Iced Chocolate Brown

LWB/SWB SWB

BHP? Maybe 180?

Wheels type and size? BBS alloys 18”

Tyres? 225/45/18 215/45/18

Lowered? 60 mm

Why is it special to you?

It just makes me smile every time I drive it

At the time I didn’t really know much about VR6 engines, I know more now...

know much about VR6 engine back then, but I liked the idea” remembers Toz.

That all changed a year after buying the T4 when the engine packed up. “I put it under covers for about six months before I decided what I was going to do with it,” said Toz. Obviously, that would involve an engine rebuild—to be fair it had already covered 260,000 miles and the cams, pistons and valves, were all well past their best, plus it had a dodgy LPG system that he was worried could blow up at any moment. So, the engine was stripped and loads of new parts were added, including a RamAir filter, a Nissan Skyline oil catch tank and new exhaust system. “We just picked up various bits and pieces and stuck them in the engine bay; the Skyline parts make it breath a lot better and keep the oil cleaner,” revealed Toz. He also opted for a new custom-made exhaust from Infinity Exhausts to replace the DIY scaffold system which was fitted before; “It’s from the downpipe back, stainless steel and it’s de-catted with a race box and then black chrome tips of the end of each of the four pipes,” said Toz. It’s made from 2.5-inch pipes to allow for better breathing—which will be handy as he might be adding a turbo into the equation at some point cost. Total cost for this made-to-measure exhaust? £600. The van has not been officially dyno tested, but he’s estimating it would now be around 180 bhp (the VR6 engine as standard should be 140). Toz also had the

gearbox rebuilt. "That was a bit of a mistake," he admits. "I've since found out that for the same kind of money, or maybe even a bit less, I could have fitted a manual gearbox instead of the auto."

He then turned his attention to the body, and it was stripped down to a bare shell—with help from his partner Lynne and friend Alan Haste—all traces of rust were removed: so that's new arches and a partial new floor. Alan then sprayed it with a BMW Mini colour—iced metallic chocolate brown to replace the previous toffee brown. That's when he added other items such as the twin headlight conversion, the smoked rear lights, and the discrete VR6 badge on the tailgate. And yes, that is a tow bar—well spotted—that's used to tow his 1940s trailer which houses all his camping kit. The BBS alloys were also painted black—he'd never liked them when they were silver. The front splitter and T5 rear spoiler were added later when he removed the bull bars.

There were several changes to the interior too, which now includes a Golf steering wheel. The original VW seats were covered with leather-effect seat covers which only cost him £100, while the wooden rear floor came via a work contact. "The base of the, genuine VW (via Cali Campers) rock & roll bed came from my shed," Toz explained "It's a twenty year old bit of wood that we used for years to mix stuff up on like concrete and paint, I thought I could tidy it up and make it look good." I think he was right. In the future he thinks he might design and fit some kind of cooking/cleaning pod which slides out from the back—at the moment Toz does all his cooking in an awning.

On his first trip after the rebuild, he covered just over 1500 miles, touring Ireland in six days, so that his parents could have the Irish touring holiday they'd always

The BBS alloys were also painted black—he'd never liked them when they were silver

Plenty of luxury up front

With some Skyline additions

Whilst his parents slept in hotels, he spent his nights in the van—with bin bags for curtains

wanted. Mind you, I should point out that whilst his parents slept in hotels, he spent his nights in the van—with bin bags for curtains! But we've got ask—how was the rebuilt engine during the trip? "It ran like a dream," replies Toz. "To be honest I couldn't fault it, although my van was a bit low for the Irish roads, because they are as rough as hell." Having made several trips across to Ireland I can confirm the roads did come a bit too close for comfort to my bodywork.

However it appears there might be a solution on the horizon for his ground clearance issues—should Toz ever feel the need to return—he's recently invested in an air ride kit, which should be fitted in time for the 2020 show season—so keep an eye out for it so you can get the low down on this rare Twin Slider VR6 T4.

Toz

And I'd like to thank...

Alan Haste—For teaching me how to build a bus properly, for all his hard work and agreeing to paint a T4 one last time!

Infinity Exhausts in Bristol—For building an amazing looking and sounding exhaust

CJ Van Designs—For the interior panelling

Dynotech RS—For their help with setting up the engine correctly

And, of course, Lynn

The Wee Camper Co

It's always good to see a new company on the scene, especially if they are offering vans with an individual style that stands out from the crowd

Craig Allen

That's why I was looking forward to visiting Scottish based 'Wee Camper Co' at their Carluke workshop near Glasgow. I had first noticed them at Volksfling last year and learned they had only been offering bespoke conversions for a year, so I was intrigued to find out more.

Arriving at the workshop I was met by owner/designer Danny Kelly who showed me around and introduced me to Ross McCabe, who is responsible for the actual builds. They had new T5 and T6 conversions in progress, so I took pictures while we talked, and Danny filled me in on some background. Coming from the music business he had begun by converting and renting 'splitters', VW Sprinter Vans split into seating and load-space compartments. These are designed as tour buses for bands and this side of the business is still thriving with one of

Coming from the music business he had begun by converting and renting 'splitters', VW Sprinter Vans split into seating and load-space compartments for musicians and bands

WEE CAMPER

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The vans themselves are low mileage examples, sourced through the Sky Group

the fleet currently in use by a band supporting Rod Stewart.

From these early beginnings, Danny moved onto hire vans, initially based on Renault Traffics, but soon moving onto VW Transporters. They have recently doubled the hire fleet from three to six vans, with a seventh currently in preparation. The popularity of the North Coast 500 and the Highlands in general as a destination, has brought in customers from home and abroad and they offer airport transfers for those flying in.

Experience gained building their hire vans led directly to offering bespoke conversions for sale to the public. Until recently this has meant producing unique designs then offering them for sale, but they are now in a position to take on custom built commissions.

This is where Ross comes in, utilising the skills that he honed in the fitted kitchen trade. He first met Danny when he came along to buy a van and ended up working for the company. The vans themselves are low mileage examples, sourced through the Sky Group, with all the logos and wraps removed before work commences. Although each build is individual there are some common themes such as full-length storage, stitched leather covers to the rock & roll beds and double swivelling seats. Italian Vitrifrigo fridges are specified, these offer comparable performance to the more regularly used models, but at a lower price. Roofs are supplied by 'Pop Tops' but are fitted in-house. When it comes to wheels, 19" or 20" alloys are on offer. The engines meanwhile are left standard, although chipping is available on request. The hire builds offer the opportunity to experiment and they are currently working on a 'pop up' rear storage compartment amongst other novel ideas. Their designs are certainly starting to arouse interest and the new build T6 which caught my eye at Volksfling has already been sold.

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SALES AND CONVERSIONS

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CUSTOM BUILT T5 AND T6 CONVERSIONS. EST. 2013

The Lowest Of The Low

It should come as no great surprise that the two arch exponents of low buses in the UK, Slambassadors and Lowdown Transporters, talk to each other

Alan Hayward Mike Anderson

During one such convivial chat, Toni Vose, the Slambassadress in chief and James Burrill one of the leading lights over at Lowdown, I can't actually print what position he says he holds at Lowdown, but let's just say it involves hooves and bungling, anyway they hit upon the idea of having a meet up and a camp over somewhere 'up north', and the date for last September was chosen.

As for the venue, that was set for the Junction Inn, Rainford, in Merseyside. This is close to the Slambassador's HQ and also the venue for Den and Toni's wedding a while back. I mention this simply because Toni knew that the venue could supply a marquee for the weekend as well as ample camping space.

So, with the date and venue set, the invitations went out on social media, calling all those who have a love for stuff that scrapes along the ground to assemble. And assemble they did, Toni reckons they had around forty vans turn up over the weekend, split roughly fifty-fifty between the two groups. Although there were more from the Slambassadors Social Club (to give them their full name) camping overnight, some of the Lowdowners turned up in the morning, just in time for the "bacon sarnies and a brew" that the Junction Inn provided.

But we're getting ahead of ourselves here. Saturday saw the two clans assemble with Chris Howes and James heading up the LDT and Den and Toni the Slambassador crew. Den had brought the Slamper, a slammed T4 Coachbuilt previously featured here and Jack, a body dropped Bay, so named because it is an Australian import and came complete with a "Roo Bar", which has since been removed. Lee Roberts brought his red T4 on Hydros, also previously featured here. Other well-known Slambassadors included Steve Reynolds' beautiful green Bay and Liam Quin's Camo Bay. Of course, there is a certain amount of cross pollination within the groups, with people having feet in both camps. Over in the Lowdown Transporters section Chris Howes brought his stunning T5 as did James Burrill, his is the Tamar Wheels logo'd T5 in case you didn't know. Rick Guy was also there in his unusual slammed 4-Motion T5.

A Dub Step DJ entertained in the marquee so along with drinks being drunk, shapes were thrown too

The Slamper and Liam Quin's Camo Bay

Andy Brown's Caddy

Steve Reynolds' stunning Bay

Rick Guy's 4-Motion

Inside Jack

Big Al's T3

The 'Meth Lab', it would take too long to explain

Some of the Lowdown line-up

Lee Roberts' T4 on Hydros

I dare say tall tales were told, assuming that the 'lovers of low' tell tall tales and not short ones....

What followed was exactly what you'd expect. Toni had organised a Dub Step DJ so along with drinks being drunk, shapes were thrown too. When the drinking games ended and the dancing did likewise, folks retired to the camping field, where more drinks were drunk around a variety of campfires. I dare say tall tales were told, assuming that the 'lovers of low' tell tall tales and not short ones....

Sunday morning arrived, more LDT members turned up and the bunch of them mingled with a Custom Bike swap meet organised in an adjacent area at the Junction Inn that morning. Did they have a good time? You betcha! Will they do it again? Probably, but you'll need to be a member of either group, and keep an eye on social media.

Ocean Influence

If you've grown up with boats, but made the switch to being a land lubber it stands to reason that you might bring your inspirations with you.

Steve "autoholic" Edwards

Hidden storage

18" Explorer Amazons

Having spent his formative years with boats and learning about their mechanicals, it was only a matter of time once his Dad, Paul, bought and built a T5 camper that Josh Andrews would find his way into one.

He was travelling the country fixing boats and fancied a change that didn't involve the same amount of mileage and found a job working for a motorhome conversion company. It didn't take Josh long to figure out that he could do a better job, as he really wasn't happy with the products the company were delivering to their customers. Instead of putting up with it and compromising his integrity, he convinced his soon to be wife, Olivia, that starting his own business was the way to go and that her Dad, also named Paul, would be the perfect person to join him. Paul had been in engineering all his life and was technically retired. He now does all the woodworking jobs the company has, amongst other things. He also had previously been involved with property development projects and has a keen eye for good design and pays great attention to detail.

Instead of putting up with it and compromising his integrity he convinced his soon to be wife, Olivia, that starting his own business was the way to go

Volkspec, the name of Josh's company, are happy to convert vans supplied by their customers, but if they don't have one Josh can arrange to obtain one, whether it be a Nissan, Ford, Renault, Vauxhall or a Volkswagen like this 2014 T5.1 which was sourced from the Volkswagen Dealer Network.

As with all new projects that enter the Volkspec workshop, the first job was to cut the roof and holes for the windows, before installing

Bus Details

What did the van start as? Panel

Colour? VW Toffee Brown

LWB/SWB SWB

BHP? 102

Wheels type and size? Wolfrace Explorer Amazon 18"

Tyres? 235/55/18

Lowered? No

Why is it special to you? All our vans are special, but this is the first to feature such a unique work of art.

Secure wine rack

The roof bed includes a set of wooden slats like those you would find in a regular bed frame, rather than the usual solid boards that most people use

an elevating roof and some tinted glass with added openings. The company will fit any roof their customers desire, but as this is their latest demo van, the choice was left them to install whatever they liked and so they chose a Drivelodge product. Drivelodge use stainless steel for the scissor hinges, make the roof as slim as possible without compromising headroom and give a five-year warranty on all their products. Based in West Yorkshire Drivelodge are not that far from Volkspec's base, just outside Sheffield. They do try to keep their suppliers local. That was also a consideration when sourcing a rock and roll bed. The one they installed came from Fabworx, it is M1 tested and can be taken from seat to bed and back to seat again in just five seconds. The roof bed includes a set of wooden slats like those you would find in a regular bed frame rather than the usual solid boards that most people use. The slats are gently curved to provide consistent all-over support and to give extra comfort once the mattress has been added, this helps to enable a restful sleep.

The seat was trimmed by another local company, Spartan Automotive Upholstery, and they padded the frame and covered it—along with the front seats—with some luxurious leather that is usually reserved for models from the Jaguar range of cars. Wanting to give the van a light feel a biscuit colour leather was chosen that complimented the wheat coloured Veltrim they chose to install, which makes a nice change from black or grey.

As you'd expect the furniture was built in house from lightweight

Sink and hob revealed

The first thing you notice is the very cool worktop and separate table

Vohringer plywood and finished with a gloss laminate. Of course, when you are building your own you can go right back to the design stage and really go to town. The first thing you notice is the very cool worktop and separate table that have been created out of solid oak and each have a 'resin river' included. The design came about when Josh was in the pub with good friend Sam from River Designs. Whilst discussing Sam's latest coffee tables, and idea was discussed to see if Sam could create a couple of unique pieces for Volkspec's latest creation. Sam agreed and went in search of some wood with a colour that would complement the VW Toffee Brown paint on the van's exterior. In fact, the whole colour scheme is based around the caramel colours that feature in the kiln dried oak that came from a yard in Kent. It was chosen because of its interesting patterns and shades. What they have ended up with is something totally unique, the process can be replicated, but you'll never get two pieces that are exactly the same.

While they were looking to include some other interesting design features Josh returned to his marine roots and took some influences from there. Including such clever touches as a secure wine rack, a neat shelving unit and even some hidden storage that lurks in plain sight under the overhead locker that runs over the worktop. You might have spotted that the combined cooker and sink is also nowhere in sight, that's because Josh really didn't want to cut into that beautiful worktop and so instead he chose to add a pull out unit that has been secreted behind the false fridge door, the door has extra storage included too and the

River designs table

You might have spotted the combined cooker and sink is also nowhere in sight, that's because Josh really didn't want to cut into that beautiful worktop

unit sits nicely over the fridge itself when not in use. Stainless steel catches and door handles have been used throughout, more marine inspired ideas. While at the rear there is neat pull out box on drawer runners that has resin river lid and can be used for extra storage or as seen here, to fit your picnic basket and blanket into for easy access. The space under the bed hasn't been neglected up front, with a couple of doors added to keep it nice and tidy, as it happens it's just the right size to fit a cassette toilet in and keep it out of sight. The company has created a series of designs they can offer to customers, they are named after some cool destinations, Bavaria, Antibes, and Corsica, these have been joined by the new Delphi model too, but customers can chose various pieces from each, or include ideas of their own, to make a van that works for them. One thing is sure though, customers can add their own influence or just let Josh and Paul run wild with theirs, either way you're sure to get a conversion that's ship shape.

There's always something interesting going on at the Volkspec workshop, you can see the latest goings on at their Facebook page and on their website, www.volkspec.com

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I'd also like to thank Olivia and Paul for believing in me and for all their hard work.

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176000 2003 £3,995 07952597157 Horley, Surrey
E: Terry.Taylor77@hotmail.co.uk
5 seater as currently set up with professionally installed cassette toilet compartment, can be put back to 8 seater as the rear seats come with the van. CD player/ radio ICE, rear parking sensors and camera. Three owners from new, last 12yrs with us. MOT'd to Apr.

4. 2017 T6 102BHP HIGHLINE CAMPER

20000 2017 £30,000 07890081353 Stourbridge
E: brettshilvock@gmail.com
£30,000 Reluctantly selling my 2017 Volkswagen T6 Euro6 2.0L SWB 102bhp manual 5 speed reflex silver campervan. Registered as a motor home. VW warranty till March. Highline van spec with full professional camper conversion incl 230v hook up & leisure battery, fridge, hob and sink, 20" wheels and side bars. Hardly used. Genuine reason for sale.Three owners from new, last 12yrs with us. MOT'd to Apr.

7. TRANSPORTER T32 STARTLINE TDI

82000 2013 07751043864 Buxton £14,000
E: mdbeevers@gmail.com
I bought this van in April 2019 from Champion Vans. I had a new cambelt installed at 77,000 miles. Have used for only a couple of months and am now moving abroad. It's an excellent van and a reluctant sale. But I don't want to leave it sat idle for 2 years. It's as bought. Basically a stripped out ex RAC van. Perfect for any conversion you may wish

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1965 £3,250 07553622080 Strete £3,250 **E:** Coolacampa@gmail.com
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8. T4 800 SPECIAL

196000 2001 01283212417 Derbyshire £6,995
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Featured in Feb20 VW Camper & Commercial. Indian blue with grey roof, side bars and 18" genuine Audi wheels. 70mm drop on JOM coilover kit. Taller 5th gear for better cruising speed. Captain seats with swivel bases. 3/4 R&R bed. Fully carpeted with cupboards. Highish mileage but extensively serviced and never misses a beat. Awning could be included

9. VW CAMPERVAN T5 DSG PORTOFINO

86000 2014 07831249811 Farnham, Surrey £34,000
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10. VW T4 TRANSPORTER CAMPERVAN

119000 1998 07838416262 Brighton £8,995
E: theperfectstore@gmail.com
VW TRANSPORTER T4 CAMPERVAN - INSULTED Well Maintained - Amazing Engine - All Service History/Paperwork!! Low Mileage!! Well looked after!! Double Bed + All Camping Gear!! - (Insulated inside for Winter!) Only 2 previous owners Just serviced-MOT till October 2020 Mostly used as delivery van in local area hence well maintained and low mileage

12. VW CARAVELLE EXECUTIVE TDI

116022 2007 07870781775 Nottingham £13,800
E: eightx7@yahoo.co.uk
7 grey leather seats, electric sliding side doors, handsfree kit with Bluetooth connection, DVD players (x4), front and rear parking sensors, heated front seats, cruise control, front and rear climate controlled air conditioning, radio CD player, lumbar adjustable front seats, multiple airbags, integrated isofix child seat and baby seats (x2), elec

14. T5.1 T28 2010 5SEAT 5 BERTH

135 2010 07999823293 Swansea £21,000
E: rogerbeynon@hotmail.com
VW T5.1 5 speed 1 previous owner new MOT dark wood interior diamond pumped sink 2 gas burners twist pull back front passenger seats, reverse tv tracker sat nav, tv still with plastic. Pop top rockin roll bed one across the front, solar panel new full gas P table full kitchen fridge microwave summer/winter ready alloys Leisure battery photos on line

15. VW T4 TRIDENT HIGH TOP 2LTR

129000 1996 01268 732085 Wickford Essex £7,000
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Converted to petrol 2010. RustFree. 4berth. MOT May2020. Alarm system. PASfitted. Tow-bar. New Exhaust,Tyres & Main Battery. FiammaAwning. Rear ParkingSensors & Seatbelts. CaptainSeats .FreesatTV. ElectricPump. KenwoodCD. Handsfree System. Microwave. ElectricHeater. Fridge. 2RingHob. PortaPotty. HookUpLeads. ColdWaterFill. Docs, Receipts & Manual

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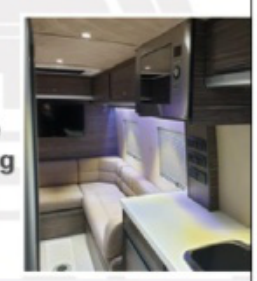
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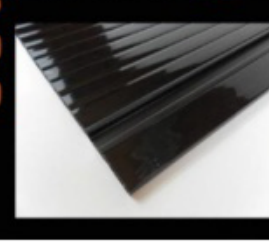

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DubLove Red Velvet Cupcakes

by **Steve "autoholic" Edwards**

In February what better way to impress your Valentine than with some delicious cupcakes that are red just for the occasion?

Although you may not be familiar with the kitchen guys... this month is the perfect opportunity to impress the lady, or gentleman in your life and bake them some scrumptious cakes. We've made Red Velvet Cake, and before you ask, no it's not coloured chocolate cake, it's got two ingredients that provide a finer and smoother texture, the buttermilk and vinegar. Yes, vinegar in a cake, but trust us, it has a chemical reaction with the flour that softens it and provides the richer texture. And just in case you're put off by the list of ingredients, don't be, as we're using power tools in this recipe! Yes, there are tools in the kitchen, your wife or partner has been keeping it from you all this time! But if you sneak in there and find her mixer whilst she's out, then you can whip up a batch of cakes without her even knowing. Just do yourself a favour a clean up after yourself, or you'll definitely have more trouble than a few cakes can smooth over. We've decorated with Mini Rolos, you won't need them all and of course you can tell your loved one that the one on the top of their cake is the last one.

Ingredients
110g Butter
150g Caster sugar
1 Egg
120g Butermilk
1tspn Vanilla essence
150g Plain flour
10g Cocoa powder
1/2tspn Baking powder
1 ½ tspn White vinegar
1 tspn Red food colouring
Pinch Salt

Frosting
50g Butter
300g Icing sugar
125g Plain cream cheese
1 bag Mini chocolates (Rolos)

Top Tips
When making the frosting, don't add too much of the icing sugar at a time as you'll end up with a sugar cloud and that's not desirable. As always remember to clean as you go, nobody likes a messy kitchen!

Method:
1. Pre-heat oven to 180C, 350F or Gas Mark 4.
2. Using a kitchen mixer, beat together the caster sugar and butter until fully combined.
3. Add in the egg, buttermilk, cocoa, red colour and vanilla essence, mix for a minute or two until blended. Then add the baking powder, salt and vinegar and mix for a further thirty seconds.
4. Using a cupcake or muffin tin, line with cupcake cases and equally divide the mixture between them.
5. Bake on the top shelf of the oven for twenty to twenty-five minutes. Check they are baked by inserting a skewer into a cake, if it's clear when it is removed then they are done.
6. Allow to cool fully.
7. For the frosting, add the butter and cream cheese to the mixer and blend, carefully add the icing sugar in four portions, mixing in between, until smooth.
8. Once the icing is smooth and the cakes are cool, then either spoon or pipe the frosting on and decorate as required.

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Practical Pragmatism

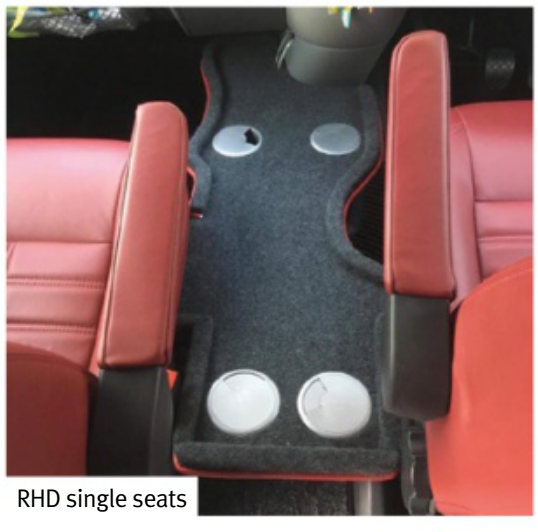
Words: **Alan Hayward**

The SeatShelf first came into my consciousness well over a year ago

SeatShelf inventor Mick Fletcher got in touch to tell me about a new product that he'd invented. Intrigued I asked for some more information and a few pictures.

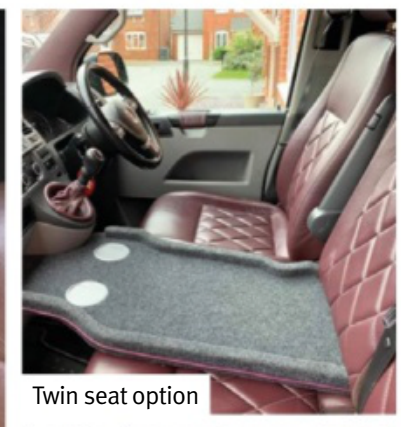
When the pictures came through, in honesty, I couldn't make up my mind whether I was dealing with a mad man or a genius. After spending a while talking to Mick, both on the phone and by email, I decided it was one of those simple ideas that makes you wonder why no one has thought of it before. The first model was ostensibly a piece 12mm plywood carefully shaped and carpeted that fitted on top of a twin seat and resistance fitted under part of the dashboard. It had two inserts for coffee cups and provided a nice platform on which to not only place your coffee, but also a mobile, a tablet and/or any number of other items of detritus that we carry round with us. Ultimately, I liked it and I put it on the Bus Kit (new products) pages of the magazine.

Next, Mick livened up the design by adding a range of coloured piping to match different interiors. Now the Big Bus doesn't have a twin front seat, so I never contemplated owning one. Later Mick contacted me again to say he'd developed a new version that would work with two singles. Again, I put it in the magazine, this time as a news piece, because by then I realised that I wasn't alone in thinking it clever. The product had been well received in the VW community and had sold quite well. A brief flicker of interest from me died, when I remembered that the Big Bus is left hand drive and even the new product would not work.

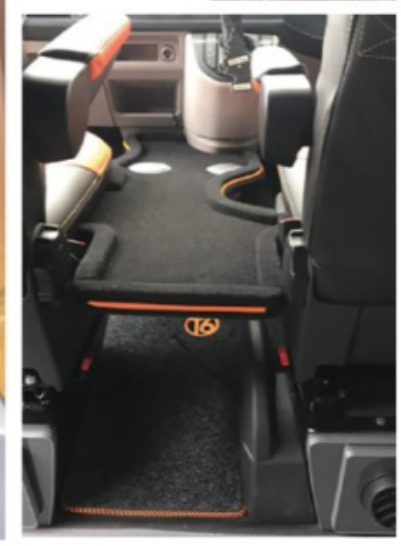


RHD single seats

LHD with added poker chip cups



Twin seat option



By now I'd met Mick a couple of times and discovered that disappointingly he is not mad and doesn't have wild hair or bottle-top glasses. He might be genius, he might not, but he definitely is a pragmatic bloke, who likes to exercise his brain, solving problems in a neat and practical way.

Early last summer Mick rang me again and asked if I'd "like to test a SeatShelf in the Big Bus". I told him that, "I would, but that as it was LHD it wasn't really an option". Ever the practical pragmatist, he suggested that all that was required was to flip the board over and build it upside down. Long story short, he did just that and after taking my colour requests in hand, built and sent me a SeatShelf, in time for my summer holidays and the long trip down to Italy.

Honestly, I don't know how we've managed without it! It just slips between the two seats, resting on top of the plastic seat base trim in a couple of places, but leaving enough space to access the handbrake. At the front, a simple cable tie holds the unit in place, via the hook designed to hold a take-away bag, to the side of the gear lever column. Like all good Transporternauts, I have slightly modded mine, by replacing the original coffee cup holder covers with some stainless steel (poker chip) cups, so that they will now hold a can of drink as well as a coffee cup. I think Mick now offers this as an option too. Trust me, on that trip and ever since, my SeatShelf has been a really useful and ever-present addition to the Big Bus. Frankly keeping all my and my wife's crap from rattling around in the cabin. Looking at some of the feedback online I can see that some people use the shelf as a good place for their, admittedly small, dogs to ride on, once suitably restrained for transport, obviously. Mick saw my SeatShelf in situ at Busfest in September last year, he decided that there was a better colour trim for my interior and insisted on upgrading it there and then!

This isn't an advert, just a recommendation, if you want to know more check out www.vdubseatshelf.co.uk I love simple neat solutions to problems you didn't know you had!

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Spot The Difference!

Words: **David Eccles**

The Beach may no longer be available in the UK, but VW have introduced another camper to sit alongside their successful Ocean model – the Coast

I have been a fan of VW's own camper, the California, from the moment I first drove it. I was so impressed I bought one! Despite the snobbery from some of "bought not built" brigade (and we won't go into what my Split Bus friends said on hearing I had sold my Split) and the fact that my new bus looks pretty much the same as every other California inside, I have never regretted buying it, though having to pass on the Split is another issue entirely!

I thought long and hard about bespoke vs factory when deciding what to buy, and one issue that I was concerned about on the California was that electrically powered elevating roof and the nightmare of it breaking down on holiday! If there had been a manual roof option, as the Beach model had, I would definitely have gone with that! However, that dilemma no longer faces those of us who love the interior design and layout of the California, as a slimmed down, manual elevating roof version is now available—meet the Coast!

For the new T6.1 models, the Coast replaces the Beach for the UK market (so no RHD Beaches with the new pop out kitchen here then). Costing around £10,000 less than the higher spec Ocean and designated as a "budget" model, the Coast's interior fittings and fitments etc are however essentially identical to that in the top of the range Ocean, and only differentiated by the cabinet finishes—slate effect Graphite Grey for the Ocean and woodgrain effect Bright Oak for the Coast. So, apart from electric powered or manual roof, and interior upholstery or cabinet colours, what are the differences?

A quick external look reveals the Ocean has more bling and passenger car appeal, with its extra chrome trim, fog lights and LED headlights. The roof canvases are also slightly different; whilst the Coast's canvas has no front window, the Ocean boasts a front opening window plus the whole front section can roll down to make for panoramic viewing. The cab area is another place the differences can be seen—the Ocean has the full-on touch screen media / sat nav / infotainment / connectivity all installed, as well as stuff like Climatronic heating and dimmable interior lights (with a sunrise facility). Whilst many of these are available as optional add-ons for the Coast however, the electric roof is not, and I suspect many buyers of the Coast may well prefer the idea of having a manual roof and the chance to upgrade the spec. The Coast also comes with 16" Clayton alloys as standard, whilst the Ocean sports a new to the range 17" Aracuju design, though various other wheel options are available for both models. There are no model exclusive paint colours, with all options including two tone, available for both models. However, the Coast is also only available with the 150PS engine, whereas the Ocean has 150PS, 199PS and 4 motion options.

Whether it's Oceans or Coasts, get out in your bus and explore!

David Eccles is editor of **VW Camper & Commercial**, which covers the whole VW bus scene. He owned the same 1966 Devon camper for 34 years, before migrating to a new T5 California. You can contact David on *editor@volkswagencamper.co.uk*.

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